

Patron The Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO  
Ambassador Professor Jill White AM

## Tribute to Dr. Stefania Siedlecky



Stefania Siedlecky AM was an original Trustee of Women's Plans Foundation, generous with her expert knowledge and inspirational in her dedication to family planning and other humanitarian

issues, We are grateful for her life and friendship.

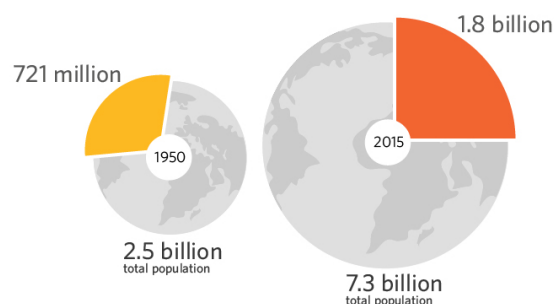
Stefania Siedlecky, MB, BS, MSc (London University in Medical Demography) conducted a medical practice in both country and city for thirty years and worked in gynaecology at the Rachel Forster Hospital Redfern from 1960 to 1974. She was a senior advisor in Family Planning and Women's Health in the Commonwealth Department of Health. She served on the Board of the Family Planning Association and as its NSW President, and on the UNFPA Advisory Committee on Women, Population and Development.

Dr. Siedlecky was an Australian delegate to UN conferences: Mid-Decade Conference (Copenhagen 1980), International Conference on Population (Mexico 1984) and the End of the Decade for Women Conference (Nairobi 1985). In 1980 she co-authored *Populate and Perish - Australian Women's Fight for Birth Control* with Dr. Diana Wyndham. Dr. Siedlecky was an Honorary Associate in Demography, Macquarie University, lecturing until 2007. She served as Trustee of Women's Plans Foundation from 2004 to 2010 and continued as Advisor.

Stefania died at the age of 95 in June, much acclaimed by the many people she has helped in many causes of health and human rights.

## The Patter of Little Feet

There are more young people alive now than ever before. [graphic from UNFPA]



**From FP 2020:** "Today marks the FP2020 midpoint and the fourth anniversary of the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, the historic moment when the global community rallied around a set of common goals and aspirations to accelerate progress on meeting the needs of millions of women and girls around the world.

As we reflect on progress since 2012, we wish to take a moment to thank the many FP2020 partners for your vision, collaboration, and inspiration over these past four years. Together, we've made great strides, galvanising momentum toward an ambitious goal: enabling an additional 120 million women and girls in the world's poorest countries to use high-quality modern contraceptives by the year 2020." [FP2020, July 14]

FP2020 welcomes new commitments from the governments of Afghanistan, Lao PDR, and Vietnam as well as organisations Population Services International (PSI) and the Margaret Pyke Trust, with the Population & Sustainability Network. We applaud the German government and IntraHealth International for renewing their efforts in support of the FP2020 goal.

Four years after the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, the FP2020 partnership has grown to 93 governments and organisations."

Australia in 2012 pledged increased support but this has since disappeared in subsequent cuts.

## Symposium: Fertility Features

The best of family planning initiatives featured at the WPF Symposium on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at the NSW State Library, courtesy of the Library Foundation's Susan Hunt. From three professional perspectives, our speakers converged to acclaim the great benefits of family planning in developing countries. The speakers combined in urging efforts to change cultural attitudes.

WPF Ambassador Professor Jill White AM was inspiring in her vote of thanks, and notable members of the audience were appreciative --intelligent, dedicated women combining in effective support.

### CEO of CARE Australia, Julia Newton-Howes AM

"What does it take to change the attitudes towards women?"

Julia Newton-Howes explored the benefit of long term programs and thanked WPF for supporting work (three years in PNG and recently in Timor Leste). CARE's researching has shown that empowering women and girls is central to ending global poverty.



This is why CARE works on issues of family planning and approaches the importance of family planning, because of the impact that access to sexual health has on women's choices.

CARE aims to shift gender equality within areas, reaching deeply ingrained attitudes to women where women are subjugated to other family members, and limits to their decision making will affect their access to family planning. It has been helpful to break the taboos of being able to discuss family planning, opening the way to knowledge.

CARE has developed 'social analysis for action', addressing the social barriers that limit women's choices. One of these has been attitudes of people in health clinics, to improve the reception of women, often of poor women. "When you go to the clinic, if you're treated with disdain, if you are not listened to and your needs are ignored, you are less likely to go back."

Julia spoke with pride of CARE's focus on helping women and girls as the most effective way of helping societies. As Julia advocated, "The wonder of women and girls is that when we invest in them, the world receives a real and tangible return on investment. Women and girls are the owners of the world's greatest, untapped human potential, and harnessing that potential and creating lasting change is our goal." Her enthusiasm and commitment have made a great difference in Australia's role in overseas aid, and she urged Australia to restore our overseas aid to at least previous levels, as it has been severely cut in recent years.

The project in Timor-Leste to which WPF contributes is to empower women and girls in a country where, all too often, women have too little control over their lives. **There is resistance from some men to change long-held cultural beliefs about the roles of men and women. CARE is working for recognition of some of the challenges faced by women, so that they may have healthy lives and healthy pregnancies. The workload in growing and preparing food needs to be recognised.**

Julia described life for 70% of the population living in isolated, rural villages. The isolation restricts access to modern medical knowledge. Over half the children suffer from stunted growth, and one in four mothers is clinically malnourished. The CARE project focuses on nutrition, creating 43 Mothers Care Groups and providing knowledge of nutrition and gardening, pregnancy and training for birth attendants, which includes birth spacing. A majority of the women now know about the importance of using contraception. CARE works with Marie Stopes International for distribution of contraceptives. Julia pointed out that the team also engages with community leaders, who are mostly men, in order to shift cultural attitudes and norms that may have been harmful. 65% of the population is under 25, and youth-friendly places and services are vital.

This program demonstrates the value of integrated programs, combining nutrition, education and reproductive health so the benefits multiply in interaction.

### WPF Scholarship Awardee Sandra Katumo

is completing her Masters of Nursing at the University of Sydney. Sandra spoke of the value of the degree and knowledge she is gaining in Australia and her intention to take this back to Kenya, where the need for family planning is



great.

Kenya's government has recognised the challenges of high population, and is supporting family planning. Sandra's parents came from families of 8 and 11 children, typical of their generation. After a surge in the population, the government in the late 1970s realised an economic plateau had been reached, and implemented population programs. These reduced the average family size from 7.2 (1989) to 5 births (1999), and by 2009 this had fallen to 4.8 births.

Fertility trends in Kenya show why access to contraceptive planning is needed. Sexual activity comes early, with the first sexual activity occurring under the age 18 for 50% of girls, younger in rural areas. Many girls have married and given birth by 18, having married because they were pregnant. Poor and uneducated girls get married at a younger age than average. About half the women say that their last pregnancy was unplanned, and a quarter of married women want contraceptives to delay their next pregnancy. Termination is illegal, and secret terminations can mean women later can't have children because the termination was done in an improper way. There is a critical need for integrated programs, to prevent HIV being transmitted to the child. A new Beyond Zero campaign will help deliver babies safely.

Population rise is a national problem, bringing increased unemployment, increased demand for goods and basic services, increased demand for education, increased environmental degradation, with people moving to catchment areas, and exposure to conflicts. Health and hospital services cannot cope, and Sandra told of being in an overcrowded hospital where a child was brought in; there was no room for him and she watched him die in the corridor.

Urging education to counter fears, myths and misconceptions about contraception, Sandra shared a 28-year-old father of six's view quoted in a community health worker's report: *"Family planning is only for women. And it makes them promiscuous. I would never advise my wife to use those things [contraceptives] because the role of a woman is to give birth to children."* Another man dismissed vasectomy, *"When a man undergoes vasectomy, it will cause death in the home. Besides, the man will become impotent and the wife will start sleeping outside and will bring him children that are not his."*

Because Kenya is predominantly ruled by men, Sandra emphasised how important it is to involve and educate men.

Sandra Katumo's conclusion was that

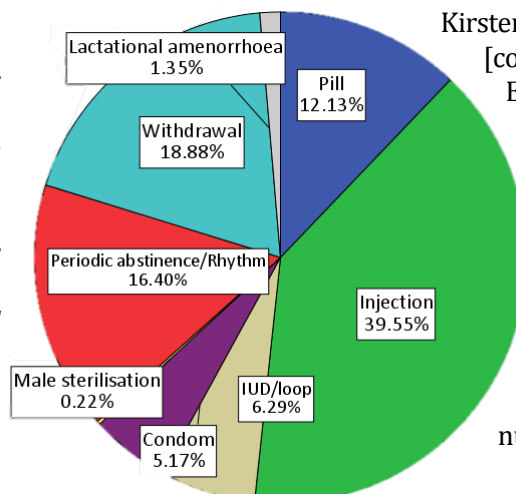
- Kenya should endeavour to attain population-resource equilibrium to achieve sustainable development in all sectors of development.
- Family planning is a "win-win" for both health and wealth. Although some exciting advances have been made by the government, more needs to be done to prevent unintended pregnancies.
- Educating and empowering people, including youth and men, with knowledge about family planning and access to services will improve health and well-being and pave the way for a more prosperous Kenya.

**Associate Professor Dr Kirsten Black** took us into the realm of quality research into why women accept or refuse the most modern contraceptive method, the long acting implant (little tube inserted under the skin in the upper arm).



Women's Plans Foundation is contributing to Kirsten's research in PNG in the coming year, when women who have just given birth in hospital will be offered a free implant, courtesy of the PNG Government.

Women's reasons for accepting or refusing this method of birth spacing will be researched, and this study could be replicated in other areas to build the ability to communicate with women in making their choices. Cultural sensitivity is a vital part of the research, framing inquiry so that questions are appropriate and understood in a particular setting and culture.



Kirsten shared slides [courtesy of Dr Elissa Kennedy of the Burnet Institute] giving an overview of the Pacific situation.

The ability to decide freely the number, spacing

and timing of children is a fundamental human right; it is also one of the most cost-effective global health and development interventions. Research has shown that for every \$1 spent to reduce unmet need for contraceptives by 2020, \$9 to \$16 would be saved in health and education expenditure, making other development goals more attainable and more affordable.

**In The Solomon Islands, over 60% of pregnancies were unplanned, for a variety of reasons, including concerns about side effects, not being married, partner opposed to contraception, and the largest reason of all for not preventing pregnancy, "not sure"!**

Kirsten's work will do a great deal to reach people in the Pacific with the opportunity to be sure in their understanding and access to services.

**Videos of these presentations are on our website, [www.womensplans.org](http://www.womensplans.org) and on YouTube.**

WPF thanks Claire Stretch, of Filmstretch, for generously donating her talent and time in filming and producing these videos.

Claire Stretch, of Filmstretch, is making the documentary **The Dangerous Dance**, exploring how our culture confuses sex, love and romance. How do outdated ideas of masculinity harm both men and women? Prevention, solutions to violence.

Gala dinner August 10,  
<http://thedangerousdance.eventbrite.com.au>  
(<http://filmstretch.com.au>).

*Save the Date for WPF*

Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016

6:00 p.m. for 7:00 p.m. Concert

Australian Chamber Orchestra

String Quartet

sponsored by Ian Lansdown

chamber music in historic Hunter's Hill home

fine wines, WPF delicacies

\$120 (includes tax receipt for donation portion of \$60)

[WomensPlansFoundation@bigpond.com](mailto:WomensPlansFoundation@bigpond.com)

Integrating family planning services into antenatal care makes great sense, as the health infrastructure is there, women are receiving care and support and have motivation to care for this baby and regain health before further pregnancies.

It is not surprising that in developing countries more than 90% of women who have just given birth want to space or limit subsequent pregnancy. What is surprising is that 61% are not using a family planning method. There is great potential for education and provision of help here.

Kirsten's research in PNG, with Professor Glen Mola (see WPF's YouTube video of family planning in PNG), will lead to greater understanding, better communication with new mothers and to wider studies in other areas. With the potential of long acting contraceptive methods, there can be great benefits for women and all they care for.

**Voluntary family planning to minimise and mitigate climate change, by John Guillebaud, BMJ, 20 May 2016**

Simply put, climate change is caused by excessive production of greenhouse gases. As highlighted by the late Professor Tony McMichael, the "cause(s) of the causes" should not be overlooked. With climate change already close to an irreversible tipping point, urgent action is needed to reduce not only our mean (carbon) footprints but also the "number of feet"—that is, the growing population either already creating large footprints or aspiring to do so. Wise and compassionate promotion of contraceptive care and education in a rights based, culturally appropriate framework offers a cost effective strategy to reduce greenhouse gases. This article outlines the evidence for voluntary accessible family planning as a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change.

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**Women's Plans Foundation, ABN 64-823-197-874, 3 Madeline St. Hunter's Hill, NSW 2110. Ph. 9817-5175**