

## Session - Seeking Input: How to Use the Population, Health and Environment Framework in the U.S.

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Data was garnered from the North American Congress for Conservation Biology and a second similar focus group conducted earlier in the year to discuss the need to build environmental resilience for people and our health care systems during the climate and extinction crises. Each focus group explored how the population, health, and environment (PHE) framework can accomplish that goal.

The PHE approach seeks to improve access to health services — including voluntary modern family planning — and help communities manage natural resources in ways that improve their livelihoods and conserve biodiversity. In each focus group, participants were shown a short video about a PHE program in Nepal as an introduction to the framework and a primer for the facilitated discussion about applying it domestically. Nepal's position as a developing country was a point of focus in each discussion. From there, participants began to consider how this framework could be applied to communities in North America.

Many participants saw the model as one that is widely applicable at its most basic level — noting the necessity for establishing a foundation for engagement with the communities it serves. Doing so, attendees noted, creates trust and can make the implementation process easier. By placing emphasis on choice and focusing on outcomes that are agreeable to the communities and their families, participants noted users of this framework are much more likely to accomplish significant and lasting goals. One participant said:

*“If we thought of it more like a well-being environment model, and using a discussion about well-being as an entry point for building trust, it could be a powerful model in many parts of rural America.”*

Some discussion participants noted that establishing trust is a labor intensive process that's made difficult by some of the misconceptions surrounding the term population. Collectively, environmentalists often steer away from discussions of population pressure due to its controversial — arguably taboo — nature. Yet, participants frequently mentioned the motivation to link wildlife and human health as a way to illustrate that they are connected, indicating the necessity for a model like PHE. One participant commented:

*“We needed to tie together wildlife health, ecological health, and human health as a way to really inspire people to kind of take people out of the center and put people in a system that's all integrated through health.”*

Each focus group discussion was driven by the recurring themes of trust and interconnection, particularly when working with underrepresented communities that are essential to the framework's application.

*“The other thing I saw was the initiative really focusing on supporting and identifying the needs of the people and what they wanted. And I think that is exactly the right thing that needs to be done.”*

The implementation of the PHE framework requires a community-based approach that allows each community to identify what's important to them. The data gathered from these focus groups will be used to further the study of the PHE approach and inform future campaigns at the Center for Biological Diversity.

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