



## PMC's New Program in Senegal Tackles the Issue of Early Marriage and Childbearing

In Senegal, 25.9% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 living in rural areas and 11.6% living in urban areas have had a least one child.

The World Health Organization estimates that the risk of death following pregnancy is twice as great for women between 15 and 19 years than for those between the ages of 20 and 24. The maternal mortality rate can be up to five times higher for girls aged between 10 and 14 than for women of about 20 years of age.



Photo by Marcos Garcia

Bokkiss is a cattle merchant. He has a daughter named Leeldo who is 12-years-old. Leeldo attends school in the village. She is a very hard worker and is first in her class. She dreams of becoming a magistrate or sociologist.

Bokkiss buys and sells cattle at the market in Lobbundu. A man named Kelli is Bokkiss's principle furnisher. However, business is not doing very well, and Bokkiss is in debt to him. Bokkiss finds himself in a compromising position when he is confronted by the police about a cow that he purchased that was stolen, which is exacerbated by his increasing debt to Kelli. As a result, Bokkiss begins to accept the gifts that Kelli offers to his young daughter Leeldo. Kelli wants to marry Leeldo.

Bokkiss and his sister eventually grant Kelli permission to marry Leeldo. The marriage occurs against the will of Leeldo's mother. On the night of the wedding, Leeldo runs away, but she is caught and put back into the arms of her new husband, Kelli. That night Kelli consummates the marriage, despite Leeldo's young age.

Leeldo soon finds out that she is pregnant. She has a very difficult pregnancy, which is followed by complications during the delivery. Because of these complications, Leeldo's baby dies and she develops obstetric fistula (a condition commonly resulting from adolescent childbirth that makes its victims chronically incontinent).

Kelli, angered by the loss of his child and Leeldo's incontinence, brutalizes Leeldo. When Bokkiss sees the terrible way in which Kelli is treating his daughter, he intervenes and puts an end to the marriage.

Full of regret, Bokkiss tries to help Leeldo recover her health and takes her to the hospital for a surgery to repair her fistula. Following the surgery, Bokkiss helps Leeldo to get back in school.

Now Bokkiss will have to face Kelli, needing to repay the bride price and his debts for the cattle. Kelli tries to take Leeldo back, but Bokkiss refuses, despite Kelli's threats of blackmail and other intimidations. Bokkiss, still disturbed by the terrible experience of his daughter's marriage, becomes an ardent defender of young girls and, in his crusade against early marriage, even goes to the imam (Islamic leader) to convince him to preach against early marriage in his sermons. Kelli gets mixed up in an affair about the sale of some stolen cattle that he bought and resold. He is arrested and put in prison for 2 years.

Leeldo continues to do well at school. Her dream of becoming a magistrate comes true. As a magistrate, she defends the causes of young girls and raises awareness among the women in Lobbundu and in her country about the dangers of early marriage.

## Mexico

### CORA Celebrates 30th Anniversary

PMC has a long-standing partnership in Mexico with an organization known as CORA (Centro de Orientación para los Adolescentes). Dr. Anameli Monroy is the founder and president of CORA and also serves as PMC's country representative. A recognition event and reception in Mexico City on October 29 celebrated the 30th anniversary of CORA with many partner organizations, supporters, and well-wishers in attendance. The event was held at the offices of UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), a longtime supporter of CORA's work. Messages of congratulations were read and commemorative plaques were presented, followed by a reception. About 90 guests attended, representing a variety of national and international organizations such as UNFPA, World Health Organization, PMC, the Mexican Institute for Youth, the Mexican Association of Sex Education, the Secretary of Health, the former First Lady (from the Salinas era) and others. It was an evening of well-deserved tribute to the tireless work of Dr. Monroy, her daughter Leticia Velasco, and Dr. Monroy's son, Dr. Marcos Velasco. If you would like to know more about CORA, visit their website: [www.cora.org.mx](http://www.cora.org.mx) (it's in Spanish).



Dr. Anameli Monroy

### PMC and CORA Launch a New Program in Mexico Using Cellphones to Improve Adolescent Sexual Health



With thirty years of experience working with adolescents, CORA is the perfect leader for the creation of a new approach for the improvement of sexual health. The project, known as *Sexpertos*, will have several components that complement each other to create a forum for young men and women where they can share their thoughts and questions about sexuality in an entertaining format. Interactive components including quizzes, information, the debunking of myths, animations, and a video game will be delivered by cell phone by subscribing to a message service on the *Sexpertos* website. The website will also have surveys, notes, and reports that users can access, as well as the opportunity to chat with a virtual counselor.

The animations will be two-minute segments about a group of friends dealing with their first sexual experiences. The target audience is between the ages of 11 and 16. To ensure the interest of this age group, the animations will be created in the style of Japanese manga, a very popular graphic style. An important feature of the entire approach in *Sexpertos* is to be sure that the information presented never feels as though it is coming from an "official source." Based on years of investigation, the serious scenarios will be presented with a sense of humor to be sure to engage the audience and to ensure their frequent return to the site. PMC is funding *Sexpertos* with additional help from the Carso Foundation of Mexico.

## Listeners Respond to PMC's Program in Vietnam, *Khat Vong Song*

In March 2008, PMC went on the air with its first program in Vietnam, *Khat Vong Song* (“Aspiration to Live”). *Khat Vong Song* deals with issues related to reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, including improving the status of women, delaying the age of marriage, and equally valuing male and female children.

Listeners of the serial drama have written numerous letters expressing their excitement about the drama and the close connection they feel with the characters. The relevance of issues addressed in the drama have captured the attention of audiences from all over Vietnam. The characters in *Khat Vong Song* have provided people with valuable insights about how to deal with important issues, and the inspiration to use what they have learned in the drama to improve their own lives, their families' lives, and their community.



Photo by Ha Thanh

### Excerpts from Listener Letters

Lan, a female student from Bac Can Province is an avid listener of *Khat Vong Song*. She sent a letter to VOV commenting on the program.

*There are characters in 'KVS' [the drama] that are very close to our age as students. There are also many other characters in the drama that remind me of other people in our society and local area.*

*Why did Mr. Tuat prefer to have a male child, and then force his wife Mrs. Suu to have more children so he could have a son? Does it mean that having sons would make someone more meaningful in life? This perspective is very much like my mother's way of thinking. The belief that having boys is important in order to continue the family heritage is so conservative, yet it is still popular today in society....*

*I have learned about the importance of taking care of myself from the characters in the drama and that I must focus on my studies. Like Tung [a character in the drama] I will have to face many obstacles and hardships, and I hope that both of us will survive. It is important to have hope. When you have hope for the future, it allows you to dream and find inspiration for your life. All of this I've learned from your show.*

Another female listener named Dien from Dong Van Province wrote:

*I listen to the broadcast of "Aspiration to Live" and feel that it is a great show that brings me happiness. It also sets a good example for children.*

A male listener named Binh from Bac Giang Province wrote:

*On behalf of all audiences, I would like to thank the Voice of Vietnam for creating and broadcasting this new program. It is a very educational story with many laughs. I hope your program will air more often on other channels and at multiple times.*

*I hope that broadcast continues on with much success, and that it blossoms into the fragrant flower of our nation.*

These are just a few excerpts from the many letters Voice of Vietnam has received in response to *Khat Vong Song*. When *Khat Vong Song* began it aired on only one of Voice of Vietnam's stations, VOV2. However, because of the drama's huge popularity and letters like the ones highlighted above requesting the program to be broadcast more frequently, Voice of Vietnam decided to broadcast *Khat Vong Song* on its two other stations, VOV1 and VOV3.

## Interview with PMC Advisory Board Member, Dr. Albert Bartlett



Dr. Albert Bartlett is Professor Emeritus of Physics at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is a frequent speaker on the meaning of exponential growth and an author of numerous articles on this subject.

In November, Dr. Bartlett was awarded one of Population Institute's prestigious Global Media Awards for Best Magazine Article. Dr. Bartlett's article entitled, "Why Have Scientists Succumbed to Political Correctness," expresses concern over scientists identifying overpopulation as a cause of problems in their writings, but ignoring it in their recommendations for solving environmental problems. The article was published in the *Teachers Clearinghouse for Science and Society Education Newsletter* Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring 2008.

**How did you come to realize that population was an important issue?**

Well, to tell you a story, I dropped out of college for a while and I worked on iron ore freighters up on the Great Lakes and I was a dishwasher on the first boat and I was a night cook on the second one. We would run up to the upper lakes and get something like 10,000 tons of this rich Mesabi iron ore and we would haul it down to Buffalo, New York to the steel mill or down the river to the steel mill in Towanda. I used to wonder, will we ever run out of this rich Mesabi iron ore? And I remember just dismissing the question, saying to myself, 'Al you are just a dishwasher, there are smart people in Washington that are watching these things. They will sound the alarm if there is any danger of our running out.' Well I am ashamed to say how many years it was before I realized people in Washington will not follow these things and will not alert us. They will figure we can go on growing forever. What happens in the future when you have declining world oil production and you have a growing population and a growing world per capita demand for oil? Well the answer is not difficult, prices are going to go up very rapidly and with no end in sight.

**How did you get your start in the field of population?**

In the late 1960s there was great concern about the environment. In the fall of 1969, I put together a short lecture on the arithmetic of growth and the fact that people didn't understand the meaning of 5% growth per year or 3% growth per year and what that would do in 50 years or 100 years. So I gave a talk in September of 1969 and of course one of the examples that was so easy to use was, what was the population of Boulder, Colorado? At that time it might have been around 40,000 people and if you had 3% growth, in another 50 years what would the population be? Well it turns out you can do these calculations in your head and the numbers are astounding. So I realized that population was a very important aspect of the talk, and then I got to thinking about reserves of coal and oil and so on and how long would they last if you continued with say 6% net growth per year or something like that, and the answer is the lifetime is cut short enormously. So I began to include resources in my talk, and so my talk became "Arithmetic, Population, and Energy." There is no point in debating arithmetic--arithmetic is real. What I do is try to stick to arithmetic and do simple calculations, many of which people can do in their heads, so that you can answer some of these questions.

**Today there seems to be a lot of focus on conservation as a means to solve our environmental problems and resource issues. Could you talk about efforts put toward conservation versus stabilizing population numbers?**

Conservation should be at the forefront of everyone's efforts, but it would be a monumental achievement in the United States or worldwide to achieve a 1% reduction per year in the per capita consumption of energy. It would be monumental and would take a lot of work. But when you have 1% growth annually in the United States and about the same 1% per year annually in the world, then you realize you are just standing still. You can reduce the per capita consumption by 1%, but if you increase the number of people by 1% you haven't gained anything. Population growth is the enormous thing that is holding us back in terms of trying to achieve anything in terms of conservation. The same goes for the related question of global warming. You hear all sorts of learned proposals, learned discourses, learned articles about what to do about global warming and none of them tell you that population growth is important. I have a book here that I got some years ago titled, *101 Ways to Stop Global Warming*, and not one of them mentions population. You could do everything in that book to the best of your ability and the chances are it would not even stop the worsening of the global warming situation. There was a lead article in *Time* magazine called "51 Things We Can Do to Save the Environment," and there was no mention of stopping population growth. You can go see Al Gore's wonderful film on global warming and get the book that goes along with it. In the book, Gore writes very clearly at the start that global population growth is the cause of the problem, it was very clear. The last chapter in the book is 36 things you can do to reduce global warming, and not one of the listed items mentioned population.

**What can be done to get population on the political agenda and make the public aware of the issue?**

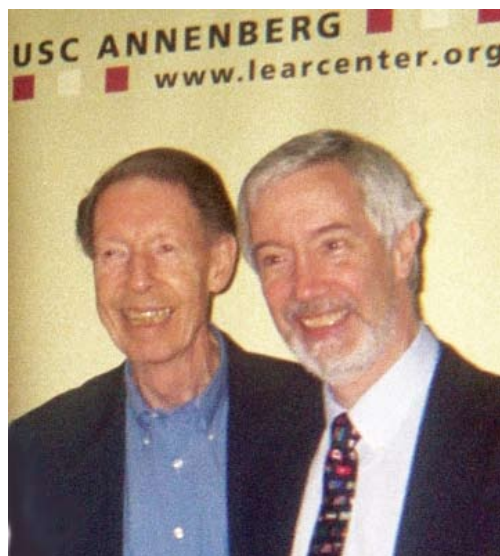
We have to write to the politicians, scientists, and journalists and call attention to their shortcomings. We need to ask them why they haven't addressed the underlying issue of population.

I also often cite Population Media Center's work. PMC is one of the most effective groups I know of on the international scene that is helping to achieve reductions in fertility rates and is able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs.

## *On the Air*

| Country/Region                        | Program Name  | Format            | Broadcaster   |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Brazil                                | <i>Various Programs</i>                                 | Television Dramas | TV Globo  |
| Eastern Caribbean<br>(nine countries) | <i>Coconut Bay</i>                                      | Radio Drama       | <i>Various Radio Stations</i>                             |
| Ethiopia                              | <i>Sibrat</i> (“Trauma”)                                | Radio Drama       | National Service of Radio Ethiopia<br>FM Addis 97.1       |
| Ethiopia                              | <i>Alegnta</i> (“Security”)                             | Radio Talk Show   | National Service of Radio Ethiopia                        |
| Ethiopia<br>(Afar region)             | <i>Naedeti</i> (“Let’s Stop It”)                        | Radio Magazine    | National Service of Radio Ethiopia                        |
| Ethiopia<br>(Somali region)           | <i>Igaddaa</i><br>(“We Do Not Want It Anymore”)         | Radio Magazine    | National Service of Radio Ethiopia                        |
| Nigeria                               | <i>Ruwan Dare</i> (“Midnight Rain”)                     | Radio Drama       | FRCN Kaduna, FRCN Katsina,<br>Rima Radio, & Freedom Radio |
| Rwanda                                | <i>Umurage Urukwiye</i><br>(“Rwanda’s Brighter Future”) | Radio Drama       | Contact FM & Radio Salus                                  |
| Senegal                               | <i>Ngelawu Nawet</i><br>(“Winds of Hope”)               | Radio Drama       | Radiodiffusion Television<br>Senegalaise (RTS) National   |
| Senegal<br>(Matam region)             | <i>Coñal Keele</i><br>(“Harvesting the Seeds of Life”)  | Radio Drama       | Radiodiffusion Television<br>Senegalaise (RTS) Matam      |
| Vietnam                               | <i>Khat Vong Song</i><br>(“Aspiration to Live”)         | Radio Drama       | Voice of Vietnam<br>(VOV1, VOV2, & VOV3)                  |

### **David Poindexter Receives the Everett M. Rogers Award for Achievement in Entertainment-Education**



**David Poindexter and Bill Ryerson**

David Poindexter was awarded the Everett M. Rogers Award for Achievement in Entertainment-Education at Hollywood, Health, Society’s annual *Sentinel for Health Awards*. The award ceremony was held at the Writers Guild of America, West in Los Angeles, California on October 2, 2008.

David Poindexter currently serves as Population Media Center’s Honorary Board Chair. Poindexter has four decades of experience in designing and implementing reproductive health communications programs in developing countries, using the entertainment-education methodology created by Miguel Sabido. He has done this work as Director of the Communications Center of the Population Institute, founder and President of Population Communications International, and most recently as a program consultant for Population Media Center.



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P.O. Box 547  
Shelburne, VT 05482-0547

Population Media Center (PMC) works worldwide using entertainment-education for social change. PMC's programs encourage positive behavior change among the audience.

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Contributing Writers: Krista Pellitier and Paul Ugalde

Text and Design by Katie Elmore

Edited by Wendi Stein



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*I have learned from Abeba values like determination, patience, and persistence. I have also learned from her how to overcome hurdles. I have realized that I have to fight against harmful traditional practices such as FGM [female genital mutilation/cutting], early marriage, and the pulling out of milk [baby] teeth.*

-Letter from a listener named Abraraw from East Gojjam, Ethiopia