



## **International PHE Conference Closes with Renewed Momentum and Increased Profile Among Practitioners, Policymakers, and Donors**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 11-12 November 2013** — The second International Population, Health, and Environment Conference, organized by Population Reference Bureau (PRB) and PHE Ethiopia Consortium, convened over two days in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, around the theme “Healthy Families, Healthy Environments”.

Population, health, and environment (PHE) initiatives use integrated approaches to improve access to health services, especially family planning and reproductive health, while helping communities to improve livelihoods, manage natural resources, and conserve the critical ecosystems on which they depend.

The PHE Conference, funded by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation and USAID’s Office of Population and Reproductive Health, and East Africa Regional Office, brought together over 150 PHE implementers and advocates representing 20 different nations from sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, and North America.

The Conference convened the PHE community to share experiences, coordinate efforts, and develop strategies to extend the integrated approach to new rural and remote communities.

### A space to share, learn, and network

The PHE Conference sought to bring implementers together to share in their successes and challenges. After receiving more than 120 abstracts, 32 were selected for presentation over two days as part of eight moderated presentation panels, including: Dispatches from the Field; Conservation and Health; Innovative Partnerships; Gender and PHE; Advocacy and PHE support; Family Planning and PHE Results; and Monitoring and Evaluation of PHE programs.

Donors, policymakers, journalists, and new possible partners also had the chance to learn about recent accomplishments and some of the most pressing issues faced by the community during round table discussions, plenary sessions, and an evening reception.

The energy amongst participants was palpable, and many participants voiced their gratitude for the conference as a platform to connect with other organizations and agencies, discuss activities and future plans, and harness momentum and energy to grow their country-level networks.

### Moving forward: Needs and priorities identified

Participants also took part in roundtable discussions, as an opportunity to sit down less formally and discuss experiences, questions, and challenges facing implementers around the world. These themed roundtable discussions included: Best practices in implementation, Monitoring and evaluation, Expanding and institutionalizing PHE Interventions, and Advocacy and Communications/Networks.

Roundtable discussions proved to be constructive outlets for participants to learn from one another. Among the many needs and priorities identified were improvements in monitoring and evaluation and communicating results with data – to increase donor and policymaker support; the need for coordinated and strengthened advocacy efforts as well as the role of networks, an emphasis on identifying and institutionalizing best practices in delivering integrated components of projects and programs; and better documentation of existing scale-up efforts and targeting areas for future expansion of PHE approaches.

### Shining a spotlight on PHE integration

The conference also aimed to raise the profile of the PHE approach among new audiences. Population, Health, Environment integration featured prominently in media throughout the week and reached new heights at the International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) which immediately followed the PHE conference. His Excellency, Belete Tefere, Minister of Environment and Forestry of Ethiopia, delivered the Opening Message, discussing the growing tradition of integrated PHE efforts in his country. He noted that greater empowerment for girls and women, and improved reproductive health, among other accomplishments of PHE programs and projects, have contributed to progress towards Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan.

Jason Bremner (PRB), Julia Henn (USAID East Africa Regional Office), and Lester Coutinho (David and Lucille Packard Foundation) also spoke during the opening, with comments supporting the potential of PHE approaches and their scale-up, and the importance of program planning through a gendered lens in future integrated approaches. The opening also served as the launch for the PHE ENGAGE multimedia presentation, showcasing results from successful PHE projects from around the world. The presentation can be used by stakeholders to explain the benefits of the integrated PHE approach.

The opening of the PHE conference featured for two consecutive days on the front page of the Ethiopian Herald, an English language newspaper, and was thus seen by many attendees at the much larger ICFP.

Remarks in the final plenary were delivered by Roger-Mark De Souza (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), who reflected on how far the community had come since the last conference in 2007. Finally, Dr. Canisius Kanangire, Executive Secretary of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) closed the conference and reported on the growing role that African Institutions like LVBC will be taking in scaling up the PHE approach.

PHE projects and programs also stood out at the International Conference on Family Planning: at least 2 side events, 2 round tables, 5 poster presentations, and 6 panels with PHE presence took place during the 3-day conference. These events reached a much broader audience than the traditional PHE community, including family planning advocates and programmers, journalists, donors, and researchers.

At the close of the ICFP in the vast Africa Union main hall, a prestigious EXCELL award was awarded to Blue Ventures, a conservation organization that has been implementing PHE since 2006. The award recognized Blue Ventures for their innovative integrated work in addressing unmet need for family planning in remote Western Madagascar. The recognition of PHE as a valid approach for reaching the hardest to reach shone a spotlight on Blue Ventures and the PHE community and was an exciting end to an amazing week.

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The Population Reference Bureau (PRB), a nonprofit organization based in the United States, organized the first PHE conference in 2007. PRB informs people around the world about population, health, and the environment, and empowers them to use that information to advance the well-being of current and future generations. PRB provides technical support on communications and policy to organizations implementing PHE throughout Africa.

Since 2007, PHE Ethiopia Consortium has grown to a network of more than 50 organizations that are working on population, health and environment in the country.