



# BOW STREET BULLETIN

News and Ideas from the  
**Harvard Center for Population and  
Development Studies**

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## Roger Revelle: A Centennial Celebration

**R**oger Randall Revelle, the visionary co-founder of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, was born a century ago this year. With a remarkable breadth of scientific and cultural interests, Revelle set a tone of engaged inquiry at the Pop Center: coolly dispassionate about the facts, intensely passionate about the ways research could lift human lives. In the 82 years before his death in 1991, Revelle foresaw many of today's most urgent global problems.

Born in 1909 in Seattle, Revelle first trained as an oceanographer, eventually directing the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and helping establish the University of California, San Diego. His pioneering studies of carbon dioxide circulation in the earth's atmosphere, stated in a classic 1957 paper, sounded a clarion call about global warming.

In 1964, Revelle moved with his wife Ellen and four children to Cambridge, launching what was then called the Center for Population Studies. As the Pop Center's director for just over a decade, he aspired to transcend hidebound academic thinking. Through his teaching and organized research efforts, he inspired both students and colleagues. Among the undergraduates who studied under him was Al Gore, whose mission to reverse global warming—as U.S. Vice-President and as a private citizen—eventually earned him, along with the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. Gore credited Revelle for awakening his interest in the topic.



Roger Revelle was also deeply interested in the food and population dynamics of the Indian subcontinent. In one of the most acclaimed successes of the 1960s “Green Revolution,” his insights about improved planting and irrigation methods reduced the salinization of Pakistan's agricultural land. The work helped transform Pakistan from a grain-importing nation to one with surplus grain to export. The success stimulated Revelle's interest in the problems of developing nations, and persuaded him that he could make a contribution to solving these problems.

At the Pop Center, responding to what was then alarmingly dubbed the “population explosion,” Revelle refused to side with

biologists such as Paul Ehrlich, who had concluded that humans would breed themselves into a catastrophe. According to Revelle's more rounded view, the population problem couldn't be separated from the problems of poverty and underdevelopment. He discerned a broader agenda: feeding and caring for the growing numbers of humanity, especially those in the poorest regions of the world. “When you educate and give people mobility and hope, you solve the problem—they'll have fewer children.”

At the time, it was a novel perspective. Whereas population studies had traditionally meant demography, Revelle's work in Pakistan and India made him sensitive to the impacts of human populations on ecology and the physical environment—and thereby on quality of life. His training as a natural scientist had equipped him for investigating interactions between people and their environments—which became a focus of his

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# BOW STREET BULLETIN

THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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## Mujahid Connects Neighborhoods and Health

As a Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Scholar at the Harvard Pop Center, Mahasin Mujahid is researching neighborhood influences on cardiovascular disease risk, as well as the intersection between race and place from a neighborhood-level, lifecourse perspective. Drawing on data from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis, her recent analyses have shown that features of the physical environment are associated with body mass index and hypertension, independent of individual factors. Mujahid has also found that features of the social environment, such as social cohesion, predict hypertension risk. And she has discovered that neighborhood effects on hypertension disappear when race is included in statistical models—underscoring the complex interplay between race, place and health.

“As a researcher, I want to tell the story of how features of neighborhood environments in which individuals live, and the social realities they contend with, matter for health,” Mujahid said. Though her findings offer insights into precisely how “place matters,” she acknowledges that much remains to be learned. Her investigations are made more challenging, she noted, by the unique methodological puzzles in measuring upstream causes. By incorporating new data sources into her research, she hopes to discover how neighborhood processes differ by region and between rural and urban settings.

Growing up in a predominately Black American neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, she experienced firsthand the beneficial social networks that often characterize ethnic communities. She also witnessed the conspicuous absence of educational, employment and economic opportunities.

This perspective shifted during secondary school, when her family moved to the more racially diverse and affluent city of Ann Arbor, Michigan. While she benefitted from the educational opportunities there, she also observed the negative effects of social stratification by race and economic position. These contrasting experiences set the stage for her later professional inquiry.

Mujahid earned an undergraduate degree in mathematics and a masters degree in biostatistics. As she considered pursuing



doctoral studies, she knew that she wanted to “bring faces to the numbers.” She ultimately decided to pursue a doctorate in epidemiology at the University of Michigan, where she was awarded a Ph.D. in 2007. There, under the guidance of Ana Diez Roux, she began to study neighborhood effects and their impact on health outcomes, an area of research that confirmed her own early perceptions.

Mujahid strives to provide rigorous empirical support for the experiences of those suffering from social marginalization. Answers to such questions as, “Do neighborhood environments contribute to people making unhealthy lifestyle choices?” may seem obvious to those who grow up in poverty—but not to policy makers and those in the general population, who often take affluence for granted. For this reason, Mujahid remains passionate about providing empirical evidence of the life and health challenges facing marginalized groups.

This fall, Mujahid will join the University of California, Berkeley, where she plans to continue “putting the pieces of the puzzle together.” Over the course of her career, she hopes to apply her research to community engagement activities and to interventions and policies. “If we want people to adopt healthy lifestyles,” she said, “then the neighborhoods they live in should have the necessary resources to establish and maintain such lifestyles.” ■

—Emily M. O'Donnell

*Emily M. O'Donnell, MS, is the Harvard Pop Center's Program Coordinator.*

## A Centennial Celebration *continued from page 1*



Roger Revelle, center, with Harvey Fineberg, left, past Harvard University Provost and current President of the Institute of Medicine, and Lincoln Chen, past Director of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies and current President of the China Medical Board, at a Harvard Pop Center celebration in 1990.

own work and, in turn, of the Harvard Pop Center's research.

As Revelle once explained, "I was never a demographer or a family planning expert. I was concerned with resources." Though Harvard's Pop Center has long been known for this synthesizing approach, not until the 1990s did most scholars delve into the interaction between population, the environment and the quality of human life.

In 1991, Revelle was awarded the National Medal of Science, for "his pioneering work in the areas of carbon dioxide and climate modification, oceanographic exploration presaging plate tectonics, and the biological effects of radiation in the marine environment, and studies of population growth and global food supplies." His boundless curiosity, incisive intellect, interdisciplinary focus, and generous

**In Memoriam: Ellen Revelle**

It is with sorrow that we report the death of Ellen Revelle, widow of Pop Center founder Roger Revelle. Warm, hospitable and a devoted supporter of cultural and political causes, Mrs. Revelle touched countless lives over the years. Born in 1910, she was a graduate of the first class at Scripps College, which was named after its founder and Mrs. Revelle's great aunt, Ellen Browning Scripps. Her philanthropic efforts focused on her most passionate interests: higher education, theater and music. Roger and Ellen Revelle's four children—Mary Revelle Paci, Anne Revelle Shumway, Carolyn Revelle, and William Roger "Bill" Revelle—remember their mother as a person deeply engaged in all aspects of life and family. As son William explained to the *La Jolla Light*: "Our mother was brought up believing one should be a steward for future generations."

collegiality are indelible. The intricate tapestry he brought back from a South Asian field trip still adorns the long conference room on Bow Street. Roger Revelle's legacy inspires the work of the Harvard Pop Center to this day. ■

## June Symposium to Explore Role of Social Capital Across Cultures

To address geographic and cultural gaps in social capital research, and to examine how social capital varies across cultures, Professor Ichiro Kawachi, Chair of the Department of Society, Human Development, and Health at HSPH, is gathering a group of Japanese and American economists, geographers, sociologists, and epidemiologists for a two-day symposium in June. Social capital, a concept adapted from sociology, refers to connections within and between social networks, as well as connections between individuals—ties that have been proven to affect health.

Numerous studies have explored the link between social capital and a variety of

health outcomes, such as mortality, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and infectious disease. While this research spans the globe, including studies in the United States, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark, Chile and Ecuador, the majority of this work has focused on industrialized Western contexts.

According to Kawachi, "The major aim of the symposium is to explore new kinds of approaches for measuring social capital, as well as novel study designs for testing the causal links between social capital and population health outcomes." A large contingent from Japan—a population with a long life expectancy—will help attendees explore how social capital may

boost longevity. Among the topics to be discussed: whether interpersonal trust (a standard indicator of social capital in the West) has the same meaning across cultures, and whether social capital can serve as a tool to explain variations in population health generally.

The first day of the symposium will involve the Harvard community. The second day will be a closed door meeting at which participants share relevant datasets and define future cross-national comparative research. After the symposium, invited participants will submit a proposal to the journal *Social Science and Medicine* for an issue dedicated to "Social Capital and Health: Cross-National Perspectives." ■

# Research Computing and Data Analysis Core: Making Life Easier for HCPDS

Without data, a population center is like a donut—with a big hole in the middle. Developing an archive of frequently-used data sets is therefore critical to the Pop Center’s work. The mission of the Pop Center’s Research Computing and Data Analysis Core (RC)—a crack five-member team of self-proclaimed “geeks”—is filling that data hole.

Housed in the newly-renovated building at 22 Plympton Street, in Cambridge—formerly known as “The Bunker,” but now dubbed “Plympton”—the RC’s facilities were designed with openness and collaboration in mind. The new space houses both the RC staff as well as fellows and visiting scholars from various programs. In the months since its opening, Plympton has developed a vibrant atmosphere of collegiality.

Typically, individual researchers struggle to understand and work with large, complex, multi-file databases, creating a vast duplication of effort. Many such data sets come with arcane documentation and little, or relatively cryptic, documentation

applicable to the entire database. The RC therefore aims to acquire and maintain large and complex databases, providing enhanced documentation based on scholars’ experience while building harmonized data sets for research use.

Among the key data sets that the RC is managing are the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), an ongoing series of international health, population and nutrition studies, each with a sample size of 5,000-30,000 households. The DHS data—some going back to 1984—are comprised of surveys, and HIV and GPS data sets from more than 75 countries. These data are an invaluable resource for studies of social and environmental determinants of health, and of migration and immigration.

Another data set, the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), is an ongoing biennial survey of older Americans’ health, wealth, social support, disability, and retirement, starting in 1992. With more than 20,000 participants, these data are representative of nationwide socioeconomic, health,

marital, racial, and geographic diversity. The Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) and The English Longitudinal Study of Aging (ELSA) supplement the HRS, providing a more global picture of the economic, social, psychological, and health elements of the aging process in the Western context.

In addition to filling the donut hole, the Research Core provides programming and statistical support to HCPDS members. It sponsors user groups, where individual researchers drawing on the same data can talk about common methodological problems.

The Center will also offer “cloud computing,” an emerging technology where both software and data reside on a network of servers. Through virtual network software, the user will be able to log in to the system anywhere in the world, with a simple internet connection. ■

—Martha Fay

*Martha Fay, MPH, is director of the Harvard Pop Center’s Research Computing and Data Analysis Core.*

## LASI India Photo Diary

This spring, Program Coordinator Kay Fabella traveled to the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) in Mumbai, India, to assist in work on the Longitudinal Aging Survey of India (LASI) project. LASI is a collaboration between the Harvard School of Public Health, the RAND Corporation and IIPS. Currently in its pilot phase, the project aims to capture data on health, social support and economic security in India’s growing elderly population.

Here is a glance at Kay’s photo diary:



# Duncan Thomas: A Life Studying Families, Communities and Health

When a massive tsunami struck the Indonesian archipelago in December, 2004—killing more than 130,000 residents and displacing another 500,000—researcher Duncan Thomas was uniquely prepared to assess the human toll. Professor in the Economics Department at Duke University, and an esteemed population scientist, Thomas had since 1993 helped lead the Indonesia Family Life Survey (IFLS), a comprehensive study of the nation's social, economic and demographic changes.

Invited by the Pop Center to give a special lecture to scholars on April 6, Thomas discussed data that has served as a critical baseline for gauging the tsunami's catastrophic effects. His five-year follow-up investigation—the Study of the Tsunami Aftermath and

conclusions based on simplistic observation.” As an undergraduate at Bristol University, in England, “I read literature on population and development, and I thought this was breathtakingly interesting. It's not just what's going on in Zimbabwe—it's a much broader set of questions. The role of families and how complicated they are. Displacement under certain conditions. Families being split because of different opportunities.

“I thought: Goodness gracious, there are so many important scientific questions here. And they're of the day—they're salient. Learning something about these has the potential to help us understand why certain people are not doing terribly well in their lives.”

Thomas' work in Indonesia and elsewhere has borne out this early realization.



Duncan Thomas, with Pop Center Director Lisa Berkman, at the April 6 seminar.

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**—Duncan Thomas**

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Recovery (STAR)—has drawn a nuanced portrait of how communities and individuals cope after a natural catastrophe.

But it was more than 6,000 miles away—in the African nation of Zimbabwe, then known as Rhodesia—that Thomas was inspired to embark on his wide-ranging career path. Once, living in a remote area, he met a young black boy who explained that his parents had been “sleeping” for three days. Ostracized from their community, they had in fact died of hunger.

“I thought there was something fundamentally wrong with a society that allows this to happen,” he said. “I understood what role there was for information, for policy, for science—and why you just can't draw con-

Before the tsunami, he had studied the sprawling and diverse nation—initially on the verge of middle-income status—through a crippling economic crisis and political upheaval. Among his research questions: How do families work? How do mothers and fathers allocate scarce resources among themselves and their family members? What are the best ways to measure well-being and poverty? What are the most important biomarkers in assessing health?

Perhaps most important: What is the best way to improve the quality of longitudinal studies in developing nations—where technological and economic shifts, not to mention catastrophes such as the tsunami, leave massive population changes? “One of the reasons I believe that serious, high-

quality, broad-purpose, scientific longitudinal surveys in developing countries is absolutely necessary is because of crises like this.” To ensure success, Thomas intensively trained local interviewers on the need for quality data and dedicated follow-up. “I worked with the teams to get them excited.” It paid off—especially after the tsunami.

Among Thomas' preliminary findings: Despite high levels of posttraumatic stress reactivity in residents of heavily damaged locales, Indonesians' overall resilience is high. “It's not that the scars of the tsunami have disappeared—the scars will stay with these people forever. But the ability to reconstruct their lives is stunning. There's been a huge amount of rebuilding in every dimension. Rebuilding of families through marriage. Increased fertility. Rebuilding of roads and homes.”

All of which corroborates Thomas' initial passion for entering the field. As he recalls, “There was this incredibly exciting intellectual endeavor. At the same time it had both feet on the ground, it was real and it was important. I thought: How lucky can a person be?” ■

# RECENT PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND OTHER NEWS

## Recent Publications of Pop Center Members

**Avendano, M., Glymour, M.,** Banks, J., and Mackenbach, J. "Health Disadvantage in US Adults Aged 50 to 74 Years: A Comparison of the Health of Rich and Poor Americans With That of Europeans." *American Journal of Public Health*. 2009 March, Vol 99, No. 3.

**Berkman, L.** "Social Epidemiology: Social Determinants of Health in the United States: Are We Losing Ground?" *Annu. Rev. Public Health*. 2009. 30:27-41.

Bärnighausen, T., **Bloom, D., Canning, D.,** O'Brien, J., "Accounting for the full benefits of childhood vaccination in South Africa." *South African Medical Journal*. 2008, Vol. 98(11), pp 242-246.

Mahal, A., **Canning, D.,** Odumosu, K., and Okonkwo, P. "Assessing the Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS on Nigerian Households: a Propensity Score Matching Approach." *AIDS*. 2008, Vol. 22(S1), pp. 95-101.

**Bloom, D., Canning, D.** "Global Demographic Change: Dimensions and Economic Significance." *Population and Development Review*. 2008, Vol. 34 (S), pp. 17-51.

**Bloom D., Canning, D., Fink G.,** "Urbanization and the Wealth of Nations." *Science*. 2008, Vol. 319, pp. 772 - 775.

**Bloom, D., Canning, D., Finlay, J.** "Population Aging and Economic Growth in Asia." *NBER-EASE*. 2009, Volume 19, The Demographic Transition in the Pacific Rim.

Baicker, K., and **Chandra, A.** "Myths and Misconceptions about Health Insurance." *Health Affairs*. 2008 September/October, 27.6.

**Chandra, A.** "Who You Are and Where You Live: Race and the Geography of Healthcare." *Medical Care*. 2009 February.

**Fink, G.** (with Andreas Bergh). "Elite Institutions and Inequality." *European Economic Review*. 2009 April, 53. 376-384.

**Finlay, J.** "Fertility Response to Natural Disasters: The Case of Three High Mortality Earthquakes." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper series. 2009, WPS4883.

**Gruskin, S.,** Firestone, R., MacCarthy, S., Ferguson, L. "HIV and Pregnancy Intentions: Do Services Adequately Respond to Women's Needs?" *American Journal of Public Health*. 2008 October, vol. 98, no. 10, pp. 1746-1750.

Chigwedere, P., Seage, III G., **Gruskin, S.,** Lee, T., Essex, M. "Estimating the Lost Benefits of Antiretroviral Drug Use in South Africa." *J AIDS*. 2008 December, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 410-415.

Nunn, A., Fonseca, E., **Gruskin, S.** "Changing Global Essential Medicines Norms to Improve Access to AIDS Treatment: Lessons from Brazil," *Global Public Health*. 2009 March, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 131-149.

Adanu, R., **Hill, A.,** Seffah, J., Darko, R., Anarfi, J., Duda, R. "Sexually transmitted infections and health seeking behaviour among Ghanaian women in Accra." *African Journal of Reproductive Health*. 2008, 12(3):151-159.

Clark, C., **Hill, A.,** Jabbar, K., Silverman, J. "Violence During Pregnancy in Jordan: its Prevalence and Associated Risk and Protective Factors." *Violence Against Women*. 2009 March.

**Hill, K.,** Queiroz, B., Wong, L., Plata, J., Del Popolo, F., Rosales, J., Stanton, C. "Estimating pregnancy-related mortality from census data: experience in Latin America." *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. 2009, Vol.87 No. 4: 288-295.

**King, G.,** et al "Public Policy for the Poor? A Randomised Assessment of the

Mexican Universal Health Insurance Program," *The Lancet*. 2009 April, Vol.373, no.9673, pp.1447-1454.

**King, G.,** Schlozman, K., Nie, N. eds. *The Future of Political Science: 100 Perspectives*, New York: Routledge Press, 2009.

**McLaughlin, K.,** Hatzenbuehler, M. "Mechanisms linking stressful life events and mental health problems in a prospective, community-based sample of adolescents." *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2009 February, vol./is. 44/2(153-160).

Hatzenbuehler, M., **McLaughlin, K.,** Nolen-Hoeksema, S. "Emotion regulation and the development of internalizing symptoms in a longitudinal study of LGB adolescents and their heterosexual peers." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 2008 Dec; 49(12):1270-8.

**Schuster M.,** Chung, P., Elliott, M., Garfield, C., Vestal, K., Klein, D. "Perceived effects of leave from work and the role of paid leave among parents of children with special health care needs." *Am J Public Health*. 2009, 99:698-705.

**Schuster M.,** Chung P., Elliott, M., Garfield, C., Vestal, K., Klein, D. "Awareness and use of California's paid family leave insurance among parents of chronically ill children." *JAMA*. 2008, 300:1047-1055.

Szilagyi, P., **Schuster, M.,** Cheng, T. "The scientific evidence for child health insurance." *Acad Pediatr*. 2009, 9;4-6.

**Subramanian, S.,** Selvaraj, S. "Social analysis of sex imbalance in India: before and after the implementation of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 2009, 63, 3: 245-252.

**Subramanian, S.,** Jones, K., Kaddour, A., Krieger, N. "Revisiting Robinson: the perils of individualistic and ecologic fallacy." *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 2009, 38, 2: 342-360.

**Subramanian, S.,** Jones K., Kaddour A., Krieger, N. “The value of a historically informed multilevel analysis of Robinson’s data.” *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 2009, 38, 2: 370-373.

**Subramanian, S.,** Jun, H., Kawachi, I., Wright, R. “Contribution of Race/Ethnicity and Country of Origin to Variations in Lifetime Reported Asthma: Evidence for a Nativity Advantage.” *American Journal of Public Health*. 2009, 99, 4: 690-697.

**Subramanian, S.,** Ackerson, L., Smith, D., Neetu, J. “Association of maternal height with child mortality, anthropometric failure and anemia in India.” *JAMA*. 2009, 301, 16:1691-1701.

**Waters, M.** “Social Science and Ethnic Options.” *Ethnicities*. 2009 March, vol. 9 no. 1, pp. 130-135.

**Waters, M.** “Counting and Classifying by Race: The American Debate.” *The Tocqueville Review-La Revue Tocqueville*. 2008, Vol XXIX, no 1, pp. 1-21.

## Special Presentations and Lectures

**David Canning.** “Population growth and changing age structure: Implications for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.” March 30th, 2009. Keynote Address to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, New York.

**Amitabh Chandra.** “Testimony to the US Senate Finance Committee on Health Care Reform.” November 2008.

**Amitabh Chandra.** “Expenditure and Productivity Growth in Healthcare.” April 2009. Pharmaceutical Policy Economics Conference (Paris).

**Gunther Fink.** “Reproductive and Overall Health Outcomes and Their Economic Consequences for Households in Accra, Ghana.” January 2009. 3rd Annual

Research Conference on Population, Reproductive Health and Economic Development, Dublin, Ireland.

**Gunther Fink.** “Social Security, Institutional Settings and Labor Supply.” January 2009. Allied Social Sciences Association meeting. San Francisco, CA.

**Allan G. Hill, Kenneth Hill, and Livia Montana.** “Modeling Spatial Inequalities in Health in Cities of Developing Countries: The Case of Accra, Ghana.” Population Association of America, Detroit MI, 29 April–2 May 2009, Session 157: Spatial Demography and Health. With John R. Weeks, *San Diego State University*; Arthur Getis, *San Diego State University*; Mark R. Montgomery, *Population Council*.

**Mary Waters.** “The Second Generation Advantage: Findings from the New York Second Generation Study.” December 2008. Conference on the Second Generation in Europe and North America, the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

**George Zeidenstein.** “Family Planning and Reproductive Health in Global Context.” *Conceiving the Pill: Modern Contraception in Historical Perspective*, a symposium presented by the Center for the History of Medicine, Harvard Medical School on March 26, 2009 Countway Library.

## Recent Awards

**Mark Schuster:** 2009 Academic Pediatric Association Research Award Recipient, presented at their annual meeting in Baltimore on May 4, 2009.

**Mary Waters:** *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age* (co-authored with Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf and Jennifer Holdaway) Harvard University Press, 2008, was awarded the Mirra Komorovsky Award for the best book published in 2008, by the Eastern Sociological Society at the Annual Meeting in Baltimore in March 2009.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Amitabh Chandra** was promoted to full professor and awarded tenure at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in April 2009. He is a Professor of Public Policy at KSG and is a Research Fellow at the IZA Institute in Bonn, Germany, and at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His current research focuses on productivity and expenditure growth in healthcare, racial disparities in healthcare and the economics of neonatal health and cardiovascular care. Dr. Chandra serves on the HCPDS’s faculty steering committee.

The HCPDS’s student program assistant, **Haili Muse**, has been granted a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) through the Harvard Initiative for Global Health. Ms. Muse, a second-year economics concentrator, will work at the Center under the direct mentorship of Mauricio Avendano, Lisa Berkman and Ari Nandi. This 10-week research experience provides an opportunity for her to garner research skills and explore the interface between population health, economics and public policy.

**For a comprehensive listing of publications, presentations, awards, and news, please refer to our web site at [www.hsph.harvard.edu/cpds](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cpds).**

## Pop Center Organizes Burkina Faso Workshop on Population Census Data

Maternal mortality is the primary indicator for monitoring progress towards the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal 5: the improvement of maternal health. Yet most developing countries lack appropriate data to measure maternal death rates, and there is no clearly established "best" approach for such countries to adopt.

To help remedy this problem, the Harvard Pop Center co-sponsored a March, 2009 workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to train country representatives in methods for data evaluation. HCPDS associate Kenneth Hill led most of the technical sessions of the workshop. Attendees included a Ministry of Health official and a Bureau of Statistics official from each of 11 French- and Portuguese-speaking nations.

Organizers were inspired to convene the workshop in response to the 2007 UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses. The report recommended that countries lacking accurate civil registration data on deaths should include questions on recent household deaths in the 2010 census round. It also suggested



Trainers and participants from the data enrichment workshop.

additional questions concerning deaths of women of reproductive age, and whether the deaths occurred during pregnancy or within six weeks of the end of pregnancy—all indicators of maternal mortality.

The "hands-on" workshop enabled participants to work directly with data from the

1996 and 2006 Burkina Faso population censuses. Collateral materials—such as a detailed manual and spreadsheet applications of the evaluation methods—are currently being prepared for wide distribution to countries that will be asking detailed questions about maternal mortality in their next censuses. ■



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