

FAMILY PLANNING AND POPULATION PROGRAMS
A Review of World Developments

BERNARD BERELSON, RICHARD K. ANDERSON, OSCAR HARKAVY
JOHN MAIER, W. PARKER MAULDIN AND SHELDON J. SEGAL, EDITORS

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In his opening remarks to the proceedings of the International Conference on Family Planning Programs, John D. Rockefeller III paraphrased John Kenneth Galbraith to the effect that the population problem must now be put into the hands of those who act—the operators. The review given of world developments is principally concerned with the development and evaluation of action programs. This volume provides a summary of the most recent experiences and points the way to new approaches.

National Programs: Achievements and Problems; Organization

The papers are grouped under the following main headings: and Administration of Programs; Contraceptive Methods: Programmatic Implications; and Research and Evaluation.

Obviously, a great deal of planning and preparation were carried out for this conference by persons possessing remarkable vision and overall knowledge of the current status of both family planning programs and research. The papers are lucid and readable and, despite the length of the book, the total presentation is characterized by a remarkable economy of style and very little redundancy. Even though the conference took place in August, 1965, the book will be used as a contemporary text, as a reference source and may in time become an important historical document. The volume will

be useful to students, doctors and public health administrators, educators, demographers, economists and behavioral scientists who are concerned with any aspect of population dynamics. I have used the book as required reading in population courses for medical students and for graduate students in public health, and it has been well received by these students. Besides the general orientation which it provides, many of the papers can be used as topic readings for seminars or class instruction. Since some of the material is already becoming outdated, hopefully similar conferences which are as well planned and whose proceedings are as well edited will be conducted on a yearly basis.

The inadequacies of current contraceptive technology, determinants of human fertility and the logistics of program development were well recognized. However, conference participants seemed to agree that enough is known to design, launch and guide major action programs. In fact, the conference report itself constitutes a strong argument as to the feasibility of, and necessity for, major action programs. Unfortunately, the dialogue seemed to stop at the level of pointing out need, and because of this the conference participants must be accused of seeing the problem and not warning the world about the relative meager effects of the current effort to control the rate of world population growth. No nation has yet been able to demonstrate a decrease in the rate of population growth of the order which will be necessary to achieve and maintain an ecological balance between the world resources and the world population. Until this is achieved, or reasonable evidence becomes available to indicate that it is beginning to be achieved, the current effort to curb population growth must be judged as a valiant, exciting and enthusiastic failure.

During the past five years lack of capital has not been the main problem. Adequate capital has been available to develop and test imperfect but safe and feasible contraceptives. Enough is now known to organize and administer programs for the large segments of the world populations which have demonstrated that they are ready to adopt contraception.

As Dr. Leona Baumgartner has said, organizations and admin-

istration may be key problems in family planning programs today. The conference participants, however, either failed to realize or failed to articulate the fact that now large amounts of capital are necessary to adequately apply available technology to populations which have expressed a desire for it. Lack of capital now constitutes the central issue and key problem.

This is certainly true at the present time in the United States, where considerable ignorance concerning reproductive physiology and family planning techniques continues to exist in all socioeconomic segments. This ignorance is of course more marked in the lower socioeconomic segment of the population, where, in spite of demonstrated motivation toward family planning, a general fertility rate roughly 100 per cent higher exists. The poor of this country lack adequate information and services which would enable them to adopt and implement the practice of family planning. Again, organization and administration are necessary, but without established priorities backed up by realistic funding, the necessary administrative and organizational effort cannot and will not take place.

For instance, the cost over the next five years of bringing adequate family planning services to the 150,000 medically indigent families in Louisiana has been estimated at \$15,000,000. This estimate is based on extensive field experience backed up by systematically collective cost data. It includes only the cost for family planning and improved post-partum care. It does not include the cost of providing comprehensive maternal and infant care which is currently lacking for the indigent population—this is apparently considered by the government to be a luxury which even the most affluent society cannot afford. Capital of this essential magnitude is currently not available in this society and prospects for its availability during the next five years, despite the administration's repeated statement to the contrary, appear to be slight indeed.

The relative amounts of capital necessary to launch adequate programs in the developing world are even greater because systems of delivering medical care on which to apply effective family planning are even less substantial than those which currently exist for the poor of the United States.

If one accepts the premise that the current effort to control the rate of population growth constitutes a failure and that the principal missing ingredient is capital, and if one holds the position that ecological balances between population growth and resources must be obtained, then the question arises of who should be responsible for insuring that this capital is made available.

This responsibility lies primarily in three groups—the universities, the private foundations and voluntary family planning groups. These are the only institutions in the world society with research interests and field experience. This has given them special knowledge both of needs and the type of response necessary to meet these needs. These institutions have the responsibility of utilizing current information to make awareness of need and to point out the consequences of not meeting this need, to mobilize social and political action necessary to generate pressure necessary to move governments and the financial oligarchy to reallocate priorities and provide the capital necessary for population control.

If this criticism is valid then how could a brilliantly organized and executed conference fail to deal adequately with it or even to recognize it as a major issue? One possible explanation would be that the social scientists who have to this point provided the essential leadership in the population field may now have caught a dreaded disease from their recent association with the public health and medical professions. This dread disease is characterized by the apparent willingness to accept the unacceptable.

JOSEPH D. BEASLEY