

SOCIAL SCIENCES

1. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RISKS AND UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING IN THE PHILIPPINES*

AURORA E. PEREZ and JOHN B. CASTERLINE

Population Institute

University of the Philippines Diliman

1101 Quezon City

The phrase "unmet need for family planning" refers to a discrepancy between an expressed preference to limit or space births, on the one hand, and the absence of any contraceptive behavior, on the other. That women should be able to achieve their reproductive goals is a widely-shared value, but the fact is a substantial number of women have an unmet need for family planning.

A collaborative research between researchers at the University of the Philippines Population Institute and at the Population Studies and Training Center at Brown University in the United States sought to determine the role of males in contraceptive behavior, contraceptive use, and fertility decision-making in the Philippines. Data were collected in two locales in the Philippines in 1993: 8 rural barangays in Nueva Ecija province in Central Luzon and 5 urban barangays in Metro Manila. Extensive qualitative and quantitative information was collected in both locales: 8 focus group discussions (4 with women and 4 with men); a survey was fielded in which respondents were questioned at length about their fertility preferences and their views about contraception (1,200 married women aged 25-44 and 780 husbands of these women); follow-up interview of 390 of the women; and in-depth semi-structured individual interviews (14 with women and 10 with men).

The data indicate that Filipino men can by no means be assigned responsibility for most unmet family planning needs, but for some women, they are the decisive factor. In some cases, it is a matter of a husband wanting more children than the wife or especially, wanting to have the next child sooner. For other women, the problem which appears to be the husband's disapproval of contraception (as reported directly by the husband, and as perceived by the wife) is distinctly lower among

*Best poster paper award in the Social Sciences Division.

those married to women with unmet need for family planning. Finally, the husbands of women with unmet need share with their wives fears that far exceed the true health risks of contraception.

It is clear from this study that in the Philippines, a systematic effort needs to be made to include men in IEC efforts of the national population program. Indeed, men are concerned, as much as women are, in matters of contraceptive behavior and the number of children desired.