

John A. Ross and Elizabeth Frankenburg. *Findings from Two Decades of Family Planning Research.* New York: The Population Council. 1993. vi+101pp. Softbound. (Price not given.)

This volume is a report that presents the results of the extensive research undertaken in family planning over the past two decades. In a concise form the empirical findings on family planning and its programme-related issues have been described in simple statements, with summary evidence or illustration for each statement.

The report has four main parts and twelve chapters in all. In the first part, the two chapters which cover information on contraceptive prevalence, fertility, and family planning programmes give an overall view of the changes that have occurred in total fertility rates and programme effort scores in different regions and selected developing countries of the world.

The second part has four chapters which focus on the programme strategies and the approaches adopted for the provision, extension, and distribution of family planning services to different population groups. The issues of user charges, cost recovery in general, and payments associated with the provision of family planning services across different methods and countries are discussed for three types of programmes, i.e., community-based distribution, contraceptive social marketing, and post-partum programmes.

The next part, comprising three chapters, relates to specific birth control methods which have caused substantial historic declines in fertility throughout the developing world.

Evidence is provided in these chapters regarding the contraceptive continuation or the failure rates and effectiveness of different methods, in particular the demographic effects of sterilisation and induced abortion.

The final part, containing three chapters, pertains to the health-related aspects of different contraceptive methods, including the advantages and potential risks associated with each method. The information on the extent of maternal mortality and morbidity, for which the data in many developing countries are limited, is of particular importance in this regard. As each chapter of the book presents selected empirical conclusions, supported by summary evidence on each topic, no concluding chapter is provided at the end.

In general, the selection and description of statements based on empirical conclusions, along with the identification of the relevant country or region, has great utility for those working in the area of population, health, family planning programme management, and marketing. For those who are new to the field, this volume can be a good source of reference materials as well as precise information about the changing demographic situation and the existence of large-scale family planning programmes in various places.

However, there are numerous important topics and issues which have not been covered either due to the limited information available on them or because of problems of comparability of data across regions and countries.

As is generally known, demographic and family planning statistics and materials are of varying quality across regions and are limited in availability in many developing countries. But no mention has been made of these data gaps and limitations anywhere in the study so that the reader may be cautioned before using them for comparison and other purposes. There are also instances wherein the varying results, due to the differences in situation and context, have been aggregated and thus cannot be generalised. In fact, a plethora of material on family planning varying in quality and substantive findings has been compressed into descriptive general statements, leaving many questions unanswered. As the involvement of men in family planning, mass media approaches, and combining family planning with health-care have played an effective role in the success of the programme in many developing countries, it would have been useful to add these topics to the contents of this volume. The results from the demographic and health surveys provide useful information in this regard.

Nevertheless, one can not deny the fact that the compilation of such abundant material of various types into a precise document is a difficult task. Here the authors' effort to arrange the material in a compact format, which includes solid evidence and conclusions, is commendable. The document certainly provides valuable information about research findings in family planning and can be an inspiration to those interested in exploring the issues further.

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