

Lecture 32: Family Planning Programme and Beyond Family Planning Measures to Control Fertility

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POLICY OPTIONS IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Developing countries are still struggling with the problem of having fertility levels perceived to be higher than what they should be. Also several parts of the country still have high mortality levels particularly among infants, children and women in the reproductive ages. A practical issue in this context is: what needs to be done in this context? Here a distinction has to be made between family planning programme and beyond family planning measures. The former focuses on promotion of birth control methods, the latter on all other factors which can be regulated to reduce fertility. Success of family planning programme is not the necessary and sufficient condition for fertility decline, and fertility decline is not a necessary and sufficient condition of decline of growth rate of population. Thus a distinction has to be made between family planning programme, fertility policy and population policy.

Once it is decided that government must go for reducing the fertility rates then the issue arises: what options are there before the national governments? Conceivably, the options are:

- Use of coercion – making it compulsory to limit family size to one or two children through political, social and legal interventions
- Taking all necessary actions to promote knowledge and practice of family planning methods through voluntary means; and
- Focusing on those parameters of social and economic development which are known for having fertility depressing effect in other countries – developed as well as developing – particularly in those countries which have similar social structure and political environment.

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All the above options have been exercised in different countries. China used coercion by going for one child policy, having legal restrictions on children, strong economic disincentives and through birth planning at the grassroots level. However, in democratic setups it is seldom the preferred or effective option. Indian political parties have learnt that even the indication of coercion in family planning is enough to bring about a change in the regimes. Initially, developing countries preferred the second option and those countries which went for population policy implemented family planning programme on voluntary basis. As time passed and evaluation reports of family planning programmes became available (and also with improved theorisation of mechanisms of fertility decline) the governments felt the need for beyond family planning measures.

FAMILY PLANNING

Family planning measures refer to all those strategies which aim at promotion of contraception, sterilization and/or legitimate abortion as part of government policy. They include having a clear cut family planning policy and involvement of all government departments in implementing it, provision of resources, creation of facilities at the grassroots levels and launching awareness campaigns for building small family size norm. The state pursuing family planning programme has to take several decisions regarding quantum of resources to be pumped into various components of the programme; organization structures; family planning methods, supply and outlets; means of communication; and ways of monitoring and evaluation through which mid term and end terms corrections may be made in different projects, launched as part of the family planning programme. Engineering demographic goals in a rather traditional society has been a very challenging task. In 1950s when family planning programmes were launched there was no help from the history. The developed countries rarely used family planning programme for reducing fertility levels. It was rather a strong motivation on the part of couples that caused a declining trend in fertility despite disapproval from state and church.

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BEYOND FAMILY PLANNING MEASURES

Beyond family planning measures include all those policies which affect the value of children, sex preference, age of marriage, and women's reproductive decision making power. One reason behind high fertility in the developing countries has been the lack of old age security and dependence on son in the old age. If an effective old age security programme can be developed it will definitely reduce the need for having sons. Similarly, in multi-ethnic society like India alienation among certain groups may make them adopt a pronatalist stand. They can be brought into national mainstream by fighting inequalities and creating a more egalitarian society. Then they are likely to agree with government policies and their fertility levels are likely to change. Table 9.1 shows the various possible family planning and beyond family planning measures that governments can adopt to reduce fertility.

The beyond family planning measures work in the following manner.

1. They subject the family size decisions to rational calculations based on knowledge, and minimize the importance of traditional, ethical, ethnic and emotional factors. This is achieved by providing various choices and opportunities to people and thus raising their aspirations level. They lead to individuation, modernization and Westernization.
2. **They reduce the demand for children** by providing functional alternatives to children such as pension schemes, insurance policies, and old age security.
3. They limit the reproductive span available for childbirth by raising age of marriage, and providing working opportunities for women.
4. They generate trust among people. Researchers have noticed that in absence of development works the governments lack the trust of people and whenever new programmes and schemes are launched (such as family planning) people do not come forward to avail the benefit of them. They may even reject them collectively.
5. Beyond family planning measures link the people to government health and family planning programmes. This leads to seeking information and eventually practice of birth control methods.

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TABLE 9.1: FAMILY PLANNING AND BEYOND FAMILY PLANNING
MEASURES TO REDUCE FERTILITY

Family planning measures	Beyond family planning measures
1. A clear policy and direction to different departments to promote contraceptive practices – targets, strategies, etc.	9. Improving literacy and secondary school enrolment rates among girls
2. Allocation of adequate resources for family planning programme	10. Raising age of marriage – through legal and other means
3. Effective organization – supervision, increased field visits of senior staff	11. Empowerment of women – promoting participation of women
4. Training	12. Providing effective reproductive health facilities
5. Sensitize political leaders and religious leaders to importance of family planning	13. Creation of social security, particularly old age security, and other welfare measures
6. Incentives and disincentives	14. Reducing child mortality
7. Information, education and communication activities involving multimedia approach – fighting rumours	15. Health insurance for children
8. Creation of facilities for abortion, sterilization, IUD insertion and other contraceptives at the lowest levels of health facilities	8. Schemes to affect sex preference such as insurance and other facilities for girl child
9. Creating trust	9. Fighting regional and social class disparities
10. Facilities for recanalization after sterilization	10. Welfare of minorities

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ADVANTAGES OF BEYOND FAMILY PLANNING MEASURES

The advantages of beyond family planning methods are many. First of all, in general, the beyond family planning measures are acceptable to all sections of society. How can there be opposition to promoting education, reducing child mortality, extenuating regional inequalities, fighting domestic violence against women, empowering them and providing reproductive health facilities? They are on their own the major goals of **social development**. Whether they help in effective implementation of population policy or not they must be vigorously pursued. Secondly, the beyond family planning measures are the factors that will reduce the fertility levels on a sustained basis. Thirdly, they will also improve the quality of family planning acceptance and make it demand driven rather than enforced by the state policies. In the past stress on family planning has often resulted in cooking up of data, forced sterilization and poor quality of acceptors (old, those who have already produced 6-7 children, those who are unlikely to produce a child in the future for biological or social reasons, etc.). On the other hand stress on beyond family planning measures improves the participation of people in policy implementation. Fourthly, stress on the beyond family planning measures lead to better coordination between different government departments and more effective implementation of all programmes at the grassroots level.

LIMITATIONS OF BEYOND FAMILY PLANNING MEASURES

Beyond family planning measures have certain limitations too. They have a long gestation period to yield any effect; it may not be advisable to wait for socio-economic development to take place so that fertility can decline. Waiting for this to happen would mean prolonging the period of demographic transition and raising the level of population at which it will ultimately stabilize. Beyond family planning measures involve huge monetary costs as well as trained manpower which may not be readily available. Sometimes putting a greater stress on them in the middle of family planning programme may leave the impression that government is not serious about population control.

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Studies of implementation of NRHM and Janani Suraksha Yojana in India have revealed that monetary rewards for producing babies in health facilities have reportedly created an impression, in the rural and tribal districts, that government is no more serious about family planning, or wants to raise number of children. Thus the beyond family planning measures may in certain conditions boomerang.

CONCLUSION

In sum, it may be argued that the issue of implementing family planning programme and beyond family planning measures is not of choosing one approach over the other or of putting higher stress on one at the cost of other. If the goal is to reduce fertility both the approaches need to be used simultaneously.

Questions and Exercises

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1. What solution does McDonald offer for raising fertility in the developed countries?
2. What the major problems that affect the effectiveness of population policy?
3. What are different types of population policies in existence in different countries?
4. Distinguish between family planning and beyond family planning measures.
5. Select any two beyond family planning measures and argue that they can lead to decline in fertility levels in the developing countries.
6. Are the beyond family planning measures more acceptable to people?
7. Should the government target at reducing birth rate or total fertility rate or population growth rate?
8. What kind of data will be required to evaluate success of family planning programmes?
9. What are the sources of disagreements between religious leaders and government on the matters of population policy?
10. What will happen if a government does not have population policy?

References

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