

1 Introduction

The assessment of unmet need and the total demand for family planning is of fundamental importance both for family planning program purposes (Ross, 1994) and for population policy (Sinding et al., 1994). For programs, it provides an estimate of the magnitude and characteristics of the additional market for contraception; population policy interests are served by estimating the impact on fertility that would result if that additional need were met.

In the first comparative Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) report on this subject, Westoff and Ochoa (1991) estimated unmet need and demand for family planning for currently married women in 25 developing countries surveyed in the late 1980s. In the present report, the authors repeat that analysis for 27 countries (14 in sub-Saharan Africa) in which surveys were conducted between 1990 and 1994. In addition to the analysis for married

women, the authors developed procedures to assess unmet need for never-married and formerly married women. These subpopulations are then aggregated for selected countries to obtain estimates of unmet need for all women regardless of marital status. For reasons of availability or quality of data for never-married women, these additional calculations are limited to sub-Saharan countries.

Also in this report, need is disaggregated into its various components, i.e., those requiring motivational or information or educational efforts, and the potential demographic significance of satisfying different amounts of unmet need is estimated. Eight of the surveys were conducted in the same countries as in DHS-I, thereby allowing trends in unmet need and demand in those countries over the past five years or so to be documented.