

Family Planning in the Arab World

Family Planning is now a matter of prime importance for world leaderships and organizations in all developed countries. It has been gaining ground in many developing countries as well. Population Studies ⁽¹⁾, no. 58, 1981, gives interesting information about successful family planning programs in Korea, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and other Third World countries. Recently the IPPF published a two-volume book on family planning in Islam, using the opinions of religious jurists to prove that Islam is not against family planning.

An interesting development in this field has been the extension of family planning activity to cover family welfare as a whole, including the ways to keep the family unity and to ensure democratic relations and genuine cooperation among its members. Extensive studies along this line have shown the importance of the economic factor in orienting the policy of family heads regarding child bearing. Projects involving women in economic production, their participation in various activities outside the home, and their access to valued resources and their control over them are considered to be appropriate substitutes for a large family.

Among Arab countries, Egypt has been leading the way in family planning programs. The large number of studies performed by its specialized investigators, the growing number of organizations involved directly or indirectly in F.P. activity, the "Population Studies Quarterly Review", regularly published by the Population and Family Planning Board in Cairo, allow this country to play a leading role in this respect and to be a source of guidance to other Arab countries. In other parts of the Arab world the family planning movement is still at its elementary stage. In Lebanon, it has been hampered by the war conditions; in other countries by political unrest, by problems of illiteracy, and by general underdevelopment. It is encouraging, however, to notice the growing attention given to family planning in Bahrain and other Gulf states, as shown in a subsequent article of this issue.

(1) Published in Cairo, Egypt.