

# Population and the Health of the Mother and the Child (\*)

**This** study was presented at the Conference on *Population and Basic Needs in Jordan*, which took place on January 22-24, 1991. The research was conducted by a team of doctors and scholars from the Department of Gynecology/Obstetrics of al-Bashir Hospital, the Ministry of Health, and Jordan University Hospital.

## The objectives of the study were:

- To examine health conditions and causes of mother and child mortality in Jordan.
- To evaluate health services offered to the mother and the child in all health related sectors throughout the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
- To present a comprehensive overview of the services for the welfare of mother and child and to propose future recommendations with emphasis on helping women space their pregnancies.
- To review the history of development starting with the first project founded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 1955.

The study concentrated on specific issues, notably (1) the health of the mother; (2) the health of the child; (3) services for the welfare of the mother and the child.

## The Health of the Mother.

The following indicators summarize the health condition of the mother and compares them to worldwide

conditions in order to access development and health in the Kingdom:

Deaths related to pregnancy average to 40 in 100,000 deliveries, compared to 140 deaths in 100,000 deliveries in developing countries, 59 in 100,000 in semi-developed countries, and 9 in 100,000 in developed countries.

A decrease in death rates was noticed in the 80s due to an increase in the number of women seeking and receiving medical care during pregnancy. The percentage of deliveries which are supervised by qualified doctors is 89.5 percent (compared to 28 percent in under-developed countries, 46 percent in developing countries, 84 percent in semi-developed countries and 99 percent in developed countries).

The use of birth control increased further reducing death among pregnant women. Hence, use of birth control led to spacing of pregnancies and a reduction of deaths caused by repeated and consecutive pregnancies. The average of women using birth control is 35 percent (compared to 6 percent in developing countries, 34 percent in semi-developed countries and 73 percent in developed countries).

The research team noted shortages and discrepancies in the information reported in official records, thus, hindering the assessment of specific causes of death. Nevertheless, the available information show heart and blood diseases to be the leading causes of death among pregnant women, i.e. 25 percent. The additional causes of deaths assessed from death reports are: cancer tumors amounting to 6.4 percent, and blood pressure diseases

amounting to 3 percent. Other causes of death could not be deduced.

## The Health of the Child

Official records of child mortality in Jordan are also incomplete. Therefore, Health conditions and mortality rates are limited to 1990:

There is a notable decrease in mortality of children of breast feeding age due to the development and improvement of services for the welfare of the mother and the child including health, environmental and other disease prevention efforts. Hence, in 1990, child mortality rate at breast feeding age is 37 per 1,000, excluding still born children (compared to 118 per 1,000 in under-developed countries, 67 per 1,000 in developing countries, 27 per 1,000 in semi-developed countries and 9 per 1,000 in developed countries).

Jordan still suffers from a high rate of child mortality rate around time of birth due to a high fertility rate and a shortage in human and medical resources. Mortality rate of children around time of birth is 21 per 1,000 of all birth (including still born children). Available documents reveal three main cause of death: (1) premature birth; (2) deformities; (3) acute infection of the respiratory system.

The study's review of the common health problems children face identified the four most common illness in 1990 to be: (1) respiratory diseases; (2) intestinal diseases and malfunctions; (3) Digestive disorders; and (4) malnutrition. On the other hand,





vaccinated children suffer mostly from nose, ear and throat infections followed by eye problems.

## Services and Facilities for the Welfare of the Mother and the Child.

The number of organizations specializing in Health of the mother and the child have increased. Consequently, the number of specialists in obstetrics has increased by 95 percent between 1980 and 1990. Centers for the Welfare of the Mother and the Child total to 161 and most are located in the urban cities. There are twenty clinics specializing in dispersing and spacing pregnancies in addition to five clinics by the Jordanian Organization for the Protection of the Family.

Hospital facilities for the mother and the child increased significantly between 1980 and 1990. Records show a 35 percent in hospital beds for

women in the gynecology/obstetrics care and a 45 percent for children.

The level of services offered by centers for the welfare of the mother and the child have also grown significantly. Hence, in 1990, these centers accommodated 53 percent of the children born during the year. In the same year, the number of pregnant women registered in these centers was 59.5 percent. Furthermore, the number of home deliveries supervised by these centers amounted to 2.2 percent in the same year, whereas, hospital deliveries increased to 74 percent (it was 43.5 percent in 1987).

## Recommendations brought fourth by the study

- (1) To improve and develop information systems and precision in record keeping.
- (2) To improve and develop health services and their quality.
- (3) To support and encourage

scientific research in order to better plan development.

(4) To organize the administrative sector and reduce centralization of health services.

(5) To support the National Health Programme for the spacing of pregnancies and births and to introduce further coordination, cooperation and networking between the National Population Council and the Ministry of Health •

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