

FOREWORD

The 1985 Sri Lanka Contraceptive Survey is a follow up of the Contraceptive Prevalence Survey (CPS) of 1982. This survey addresses some of the major issues raised by the 1982 CPS and the 1975 World Fertility Survey (WFS). Between WFS and CPS, a period of 7 years, use of traditional methods increased by 11 percentage points. Yet, in the CPS and Family Health Impact Survey (FHIS), both conducted in 1982, the estimated prevalence of traditional contraceptive use differed substantially - from 24% in the CPS to only 14% in the FHIS. Of immediate concern was whether CPS had overestimated the prevalence of traditional methods. A second issue was what caused Sri Lankan couples to adopt these traditional methods in preference to modern temporary methods. These issues have a decisive bearing on how information and education programs should be structured, to whom they should be directed, and on the delivery of services to motivated couples. These concerns were voiced at several meetings following the release of CPS findings by personnel at the helm of Governments' population programs and managers of non-governmental programs and they led to the decision to further investigate the situation.

The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) of the Ministry of Plan Implementation collaborated with Family Health International (FHI) in this venture. FHI provided financial support and technical assistance to the DCS to ensure that the practice of contraception was measured as completely and as accurately as possible, and a new approach was developed and adopted by an enthusiastic team of DCS staff. In order to measure contraceptive change over time and to validate previous estimates of traditional contraceptive use, it was decided that the women to be interviewed should be the 1982 CPS respondents. Accordingly, a sample of 2310 currently married women under the age of 50 years who were CPS respondents were reinterviewed using a detailed survey questionnaire. A sub-sample of 577 of their husbands were also interviewed. The preliminary results of this study are presented in this report. An earlier draft of many of the chapters was presented at a seminar held in Colombo in May 1986.

The report goes a long way in identifying obstacles to the effective use of temporary methods of contraception in Sri Lanka. Concerns about side effects and insufficient knowledge about the proper use of modern temporary methods have contributed to the low prevalence of use of these methods. Furthermore, incorrect or incomplete knowledge of the safe and unsafe periods in a woman's menstrual cycle is hampering the efforts of traditional contraceptive users to space their births and achieve their desired family size. Wider dissemination of information and better counselling services are clearly needed for couples using modern and traditional temporary methods.

We earnestly hope that these findings and all other data gathered will be critically analysed and utilised both for the advancement of the state of the art in contraceptive surveys and for providing information for a more efficient family planning service delivery system for Sri Lankan couples.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sri Lanka Contraceptive Survey (SLCS) is a collaborative effort between the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) Sri Lanka and the Family Health International (FHI) USA.

I thank the staff of FHI for taking the initiative to conduct this survey. Special thanks are due to Dr. Nancy Williamson, Director of Program Evaluation Division. Dr. Thomas Kane, Project Monitor to this survey, worked closely with DCS staff and provided technical assistance at various stages. Dr. Shyam Thapa played a key role in maintaining liaison between FHI and DCS and also reviewed the first draft of the survey report. Thanks are also due to Dr. Barbara Janowitz, Dr. Douglas Nichols and Dr. Jim McMahan.

The USAID provided financial assistance to the survey. I would like to extend our appreciation to Ms. Eileen Oldwine and Dr. Gnani Thenabdu of USAID in Colombo for their assistance.

I thank Mrs. Mimi Nichter who served as a consultant in anthropology to the exploratory phase of the survey and to Dr. Ann Evans who participated in the initial stage of the project.

Many governmental and non-governmental organization related to population studies assisted by identifying research questions and hypothesis in the light of the findings of the contraceptive Prevalence Survey, 1982. Special thanks are due to the Population Division of the Ministry of Plan Implementation, the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health, and the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka.

I wish to thank the officers of the Department of Census and Statistics who were actively involved in the implementation of this survey.

Finally, and most earnestly, I thank the respondents to the survey for their willing co-operation.



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15 July, 1988.