



## **Concept, need, importance and role of Health Education in family**

### **Introduction**

With a population of 1210 million, as per the census 2011, India is the second most populous country in the world next only to China, whereas seventh in land area. With only 2.4% of the world's land area, India is supporting 16.87 percent of the world's population.

India's population has been increasing steadily since 1921. The year 1921 is known as "the big divide" because the absolute number added to the population during each decade has been on the increase since then. It will be alarming to know that the country's population is currently increasing at the rate of 16 million each year.

While the global population has increased 3 times, India has increased its population 5 times during the last century. It has been estimated that with the current trends, the population in India will increase from 1210 million to 1400 million, an increase in 13.57%, and is expected to exceed that of China before 2030 to become the most populous country in the world.

Recognizing that key factors in fertility decline include change in government's attitude towards growth, the spread of education, increased availability of contraception and the extension of services offered through family planning program as well as the marked changes in the marriage patterns, India launched the Family Planning Programme in 1952.

India is the first country to launch such programs emphasizing fertility regulation for reducing birth rates to the extent necessary to stabilize the population at a level consistent with the socio-economic development and environmental protection.

The role of Family Planning is also being recognized by national policies and the country's five years' plan too. Thus as per the current 12th Five Year Plan and National Population Policy (NPP) 2000, the program is currently being repositioned to not only achieve population stabilization but also to promote reproductive health and reduce maternal, infant & child mortality and morbidity.

The National Health Mission, the flagship program of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare envisages towards providing accessible, affordable, accountable, effective and reliable primary health care. It provides a policy framework for advancing goals and prioritizing strategies to meet the reproductive and child health needs of the people of India, and to achieve replacement level of total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.1 by 2017 (12th plan goal).

(TFR represents the average number of children a woman would have if she has to pass through her reproductive years bearing children at the same rates as the women now in each age group)

### **Definition**

WHO defines family planning as a way of thinking and living that is adopted voluntarily upon the basis of knowledge, attitudes and responsible decisions by individual and couples, in order to promote the health and welfare of family groups and thus contribute to the social development of a country.

Another WHO expert committee describes it as the practices that help individuals or couples to attain certain objectives:

- to avoid unwanted births
- to bring about wanted births
- to regulate the intervals between pregnancies
- to control the time at which birth occurs in relation to the ages of the parent; and
- to determine the number of children in a family

The United Nations Conference on human rights, 1968 has recognized family planning as a basic human right. The Bucharest Conference on World Population, 1978 endorsed the same and stated in Call to Action that: "all couple and individuals have the basic human right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information ,education, and means to do so" Thus, during the past few decades family planning has emerged from whispers in private quarters to the focus of international concern as a basic human rights, and a component of family health and social welfare.

### **Scope of family planning services**

Family planning is not synonymous with birth control; it is much more than mere birth control. The WHO expert committee has stated that family planning includes the following

- proper spacing and limitations of births
- advice on sterility
- education for parenthood
- sex education
- screening for pathological conditions related to reproductive system
- genetic counseling
- premarital consultation and examination
- carrying out pregnancy tests
- marriage counseling
- the preparation of couples for their first child
- providing services for unmarried mothers
- teaching home economics and nutrition
- providing adoption services

These activities may vary from country to country and India has also adopted their own sets of objectives and policies in this regard.

### **Benefits of Family Planning:**

The major benefits of family planning can be described as under:

- Stabilizes population
- Reduces maternal mortality
- Reduces infant and child mortality

Though, the principal outcome of family planning caters towards health aspects of women, fetal, infant and child health, it overall stabilizes as well as slower the rate of population growth benefiting all aspects of development viz Education, Health, Agriculture, Environment, Urbanization, Economy as well as poverty alleviation.

### **The Family Welfare concept**

Family planning is associated with numerous misconceptions-one of them is its strong association in the minds of people with sterilization. Other equates it with birth control. The recognition of its welfare concept came after its inception when it was named Family Welfare Programme.

The concept of welfare is very comprehensive and is basically related to the quality of life. Thus, it aims at receiving a higher end-that is to improve the quality of life of the people.

### **Small-family norm**

Small differences in the family size will make big differences in the birth rate. The difference of only one child per family over a decade will have tremendous impact on the population growth.

The objective of the Family Welfare Programme in India is that the people should adopt the "**small family norm**" to stabilize the country's population by the end of 2045. Symbolized by the inverted red triangle, the program initially adopted the model of 3-children family. But in view of seriousness of the situation, since 1980s the campaign has been advocated to the 2 children norm. The current emphasis is on three themes: "Sons or daughters –two will do"; "Second child after three years", and "Universal Immunization". The Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) is a programme launched by Government of India with an objective to reduce mortality and morbidity resulting from vaccine-preventable diseases. It focuses both of immunization of children as well as pregnant women.

A significant achievement of the Family Welfare Programme in India has been the decline in the fertility rate. All efforts are being made to reduce the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) to 2.1 by 2017. The current TFR is 2.5. as per the recent survey conducted by Government of India.

### **Goals and objectives: India**

The National Population Policy (NPP), 2000 has advocated a holistic multisectoral approach towards population stabilization. In accordance to this as well as the 12th Five Year Plan, specific interventions have been laid down through National Health Mission (previously known as National Rural Health Mission) has formulated the following objectives;

- Address the unmet needs of contraception, Reproductive and Child Health care
- Achieve Replacement Level Fertility by 2010(put back to 2021)
- Bring about population stabilization by 2045(put back to 2026)

**Further, specific targets in regard to family planning has been set as under:**

- Reduce the unmet need for family planning methods among eligible couples, married and unmarried, at annual rate of 8.8% from the baseline of 21%\*.
- Increase met need for modern family planning methods among eligible couples at an annual rate of 4.5% from the baseline of 47%\*.

The baseline data has been adopted from the survey data conducted by the Government of India.

**Situational analysis**

India has not achieved the desired rate but the decline rate has accelerated since the implementation of National Rural Health Mission in 2005. Currently, twenty one states have already achieved the replacement level of fertility or less while seven more states are on the verge of achieving replacement level; of fertility. Concern remains with seven high focus states, which have a TFR of 3.0 or more as these are also the states with the highest burden of maternal and child mortality. The GOI has set up goal of reducing TFR to 2.1 by the year 2025. Some of the states have already achieved the goal including the state of Manipur, which has a TFR of 1.6.

**Government of India Programmatic interventions:**

Like other countries, India has also set certain interventions for strategic delivery of the programs as under:

- Servicing the unmet needs based on the felt needs of the community
- Target free approach
- Children by choice and not by chance
- Basket of contraceptive choices thus giving equal emphasis on all kinds of contraception
- Increasing the acceptance of contraception through community participation as well as advocacy by local community workers like Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA)
- Provision of Family Planning Indemnity Scheme (previously known as the Family Planning Insurance Scheme), Anganwadi workers.
- Promoting Public Private Partnership
- Ensuring quality services through various interventions by the stakeholders at all levels of health facilities.
- Observation of World Population Day on July 11th of every year with a specific theme. Health melas, family planning counseling as well as camps are being conducted to promote and propagate the same.

This year all the states in the country have observed the World Population Day with the theme: "Vulnerable Populations in Emergencies".

### **Translating policies into actions**

In order to translate the policies into specific actions we may divide into three themes as under:

#### **a) Strategic efforts**

- Community needs assessment approach and exercising demand generation through the same.
- Strategic and scientific planning of felt unmet needs at all the levels

#### **b) Expand basket of methods**

- Improve contraceptive choices to all the eligible couples
- Enhance the use of birth spacing and educate the need of same to the target population

#### **c) Capitalize on best practices**

- Scaling up effective innovations
- Promoting sharing of best practices and scaling up the same.

### **Importance and role of Health Education in family**

Before concluding the importance of health education regarding family planning it should be re-emphasized as it directly and in-directly brings about a healthy nation through healthy mother and healthy child. The various programs under Government of India through facility based as well as community based education and outreach programs seeks to ensure that all the communities are equipped with valid knowledge of the various services of the family planning program. It also envisages that they have access to preventive health services and education at all the levels.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, family planning programme is a very important program to promote and propagate population stabilization. It has come a long way and holds forth the promise that in the not very distant future it may be accepted as a way of life by most of people. Although birth control continues to occupy the same important position in the programme as it used to be in the earlier days the programme now aims at achieving a higher end-and that is, to improve, in conjunction with other development programmes, the quality of life of the people.