

## 12 Summary and Conclusions

The original objective of this report was to bring up to date the comparative analysis of unmet need based on 25 countries included in DHS-I in which surveys had been conducted in the late 1980s. This original objective has been met. Furthermore, 27 countries with surveys completed in the first half of the 1990s have been included and the content of this report has been considerably expanded. In addition to presenting the estimates of unmet need for married women, estimates have been included for some countries for never-married and for formerly married women. Another new direction has been to include an analysis of the reasons why many women in need do not intend to use any method of contraception. Finally, the potential future demand for family planning and the implied reduction of fertility rates based on four different assumptions of the amount and kinds of unmet need satisfied have been estimated.

Countries represented in both DHS-I and DHS-II, covering roughly a five-year interval, have shown a fairly consistent small decline in the amount of unmet need. In a sense, unmet need is a moving target, increasing as higher proportions of women desire to control their fertility and decreasing with the adoption of contraception.

Two estimates of unmet need for the never-married women are provided, one for those who reported sex in the past month and

another for those who ever had sex. The fraction of never-married women in sub-Saharan Africa with an unmet need is estimated as an average of 9 percent under the first definition and 17 percent if one prefers any history of sexual experience as the base. Estimates for formerly married women show an average unmet need of 14 percent across all countries. An average of 29 percent of married women in sub-Saharan Africa compared with 19 percent in other regions are estimated to have an unmet need.

Because all women classified in need of family planning are unlikely to use contraception in the future (surprisingly high proportions say that they do not intend to use for such reasons as lack of information, opposition to the idea, health reasons, or ambivalence about their childbearing preferences), the authors have developed several estimates of the fertility implications of the potential demand for family planning if different amounts of unmet need were satisfied. The most likely set of assumptions yields an average of a 17 percent decline in the total fertility rate in 14 sub-Saharan countries and an 18 percent decline across all of the 27 countries included in the report. Viewed in terms of the proportion of the distance to replacement fertility, the satisfaction of unmet need even with very conservative assumptions has significant potential demographic implications. It would exceed 50 percent in some countries and in sub-Saharan Africa the average effect would be to cover 25 percent of the distance to replacement.