

Population Stabilization Reports: A Comparative Study

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All populations will achieve stabilization either by lowering birth rates or increasing death rates. Eventually family sizes greater than replacement will lead to increasing impoverishment and prevent the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. In Southern India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico and Thailand, total fertility rates are close to replacement. The governments, in collaboration with the NGO's and the private sector have expanded access to primary health care, provided health and family planning services for adolescents, increased the age of marriage to 20 for girls and 23 for boys and assisted couples with spacing and preventing unwanted births. With all successful programs there has been committed leadership in both the public and private sectors. All health providers have been contracted to utilize available contraceptive methods within their capabilities or qualifications after training in both their public and private practices.

Social marketing, depot distribution and fulltime family planning field workers have brought health and contraceptive services to the doorstep of every household. Mass media campaigns, functional literacy programs, women's clubs and cooperatives, and access to credit and micro enterprises have all reinforced cradle to grave initiatives to lower maternal and infant mortality and, ultimately, couples want and have two or three children.

At present, 75 heads of government have signed the Statement on Population Stabilization. The most effective programs have cabinet level committees reporting directly to the head of state. When replacement size families are achieved, the governor generals, parliamentarians, the judiciary, business and professional groups, religious leaders and the media have been actively involved in expanding access to services and promoting information, education and communication programs. In all successful programs couples want small family sizes in order to provide a better standard of living for their children, themselves and their community.

Even in the most successful programs in Korea and Taiwan the populations have doubled. In sub-Saharan Africa, the populations have quadrupled and some have quintupled since Independence. With close to half of the population below the age of 17, all populations will double and most likely triple even with policies and programs to achieve replacement size families now. There are exciting, dynamic, honest and highly trained professionals in all sectors of the society that can provide the leadership structure for the policies and actions that can result in the two-child goal.