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PFHS-380.665 FAMILY PLANNING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Ethical Issues in Population Policy

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Over the last three decades many papers have appeared dealing with a wide range of ethical issues concerned with population policy. These concern not only fertility control in the context of family planning, but also a broader range of topics extending from migration to euthanasia. This discussion session will look broadly at the concerns with human rights and reproductive choice, and then focus on the ethics of incentives and disincentives in influencing family size and contraceptive behavior.

1. Human Rights and Reproductive Choice

The article by **Freedman and Isaacs (1993)** places the right of reproductive choice in legal and historical contexts, and specifically examines two key issues: the tension between demographic priorities and reproductive choice, and the tension between international standards and local custom/religion. The following are questions to discuss in reviewing this article:

1. Why do the authors introduce their article with the notion that "... health policies and programs cannot treat reproduction as mere mechanics, as isolated biological events of conception and birth; rather they must treat it as a lifelong process inextricably linked to the status and roles of women in their homes and societies"? Specifically, what does this mean for health professionals? Give examples.
2. What "basic principles" do the authors distill from a "women-centered approach to reproductive health"?
3. Trace chronologically the connections between human rights and reproductive rights as these evolved in international declarations, statements, resolutions, conventions and treaties since World War II.
4. The authors list 5 kinds of incentives/disincentives often used in population and family planning programs and then say that "incentives can be analyzed from a number of different perspectives" and give 9 examples. Give your views on examples 4, 5, and 7.
5. The authors observe the fact that in many developing countries, particularly Muslim states in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, "...there is a more complex interplay of state, religious and customary law." What are some consequences of this?
6. With reference to the issues raised in question 5, the authors identify "the promotion of women's reproductive autonomy as a central value" as the "a central question in the development of a reproductive health strategy". Without disagreeing with the authors, can you identify any other values that should also be taken into account in the development of a reproductive health strategy?

2. Incentives, Disincentives and Reproductive Choice

The article by **Warwick (1990)** has been selected because it provides a brief but useful overview of many of the key issues surrounding the use of incentives and or disincentives along with references to many case studies. The article is instructive in that it approaches these issues from an ethical perspective. It is important to note that this article provides only the briefest summary of a very extensive literature, primarily from the perspective of one author. Students interested in exploring these issues in depth are referred to the original articles cited and critiqued by Warwick. Questions 1- 5 should be answered as you study Warwick's article.

1. What is the relationship between how the "population problem" is defined and the government actions that may follow?
2. What are the two broad approaches that are generally taken in studies on the ethics of population control?
3. Describe the five ethical principles that Warwick uses in his analysis of the issues.
4. What are some conditions that must be present if women are to truly have "free choice" in choosing a contraceptive method?
5. How can incentive payments to persons who accept contraceptives actually limit freedom and violate justice?
6. Can government "pressure" to limit family size for socio-economic reasons be justified as actually "liberating" women from family and community pressures to marry early and restrict their role to childbearing and childrearing?
7. Can coercive measures for population control ever be ethically justified? Why or why not?

Isaacs (1995) also addresses the ethical issue of incentives. This article follows his earlier article with Freedman that is discussed above, and also follows three world conferences dealing with human rights/women's rights/reproductive rights held in 1993, 1994 and 1995. Answer the following questions, referring to Isaacs' article:

1. What three world conferences does Isaacs refer to, and what are the conflicts in values that have arisen?
2. Are Isaacs' 5 principles related to restricting reproductive choice in accord with Warwick's 5 ethical principles? Why or why not?
3. In the section on Next Steps Isaacs raises the question of "...who should determine the standards..." What is the problem of depending upon a group of people to set universal ethical standards? What are the alternatives?

Required Readings:

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Recommended Readings:

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- Satia JK and Maru RM. Incentives and disincentives in the Indian Family Welfare Program. *Studies in Family Planning* 17(3):136-145, 1986.
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