

# *Introduction and Dedication*

**F**amily planning is making great progress. During the past several decades we have moved ahead in many ways:

- Family planning is now seen as a human right—basic to human dignity. People and governments around the world understand this.
- Nearly everyone now knows about family planning. Most people also know of some family planning methods.
- Family planning has community support. People expect that most others in their community practice family planning, and they approve.
- Most people use family planning. At any one time, more than half of the world's married couples are family planning users.

This handbook covers family planning methods and services. Great progress has been made in these areas, too. As family planning providers, we can offer more choices to more people. People can use family planning more effectively and more safely.

- Couples now can choose from more methods. These include injectables, implants, female and male sterilization, new IUDs, oral contraceptives, condoms, various spermicides, diaphragms, and cervical caps. We have a

better understanding of fertility awareness-based methods (modern versions of the rhythm method) and breastfeeding. Now they can be used to prevent pregnancy more effectively.

- We have learned that almost everyone can use modern family planning methods safely. At the same time, we are better able to single out the people who should not use certain methods. We also know that, for most methods, most clients do not require physical examinations or laboratory tests.
- We have discovered important health benefits of some family planning methods, besides preventing unintended pregnancies. For example, combined oral contraceptives help stop anemia, reduce pelvic inflammatory disease, decrease menstrual cramps and pain, and even help prevent several types of cancer.
- Condoms help prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other infections, especially when used every time. Spermicides, diaphragms, and cervical caps for women also may help somewhat. Many family planning clients need protection from STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Family planning providers are seeing that, and they are helping more clients prevent STDs.
- Many different types of people now provide family planning supplies, services, and information. For example, many different kinds of health professionals, and not just doctors, provide most methods in clinics and in communities. Shopkeepers sell family planning supplies. Community members distribute supplies and help their neighbors.
- We are doing a better job of telling people about family planning and helping them make reproductive health decisions. We are helping them make informed choices. We do this in face-to-face discussion and counseling, through radio, television, and newspapers, and in community events.
- We are making it easy for people to get family planning and other reproductive health care. We are removing unnecessary barriers of all kinds. These barriers have included lack of information, not enough service points, limited hours, few methods, not enough

supplies, restrictions on who can be served, out-of-date medical eligibility criteria (“contraindications”), and required tests or physical exams when these did not help decide on a method or make its use safer, and clients did not want them. To make family planning easy, we are giving people more choices—choices among family planning methods, choices among key reproductive health services, choices among places and times to obtain services and supplies, choices among information sources, and choices among the type of personnel who provide care. The more choices that people have, the better they can find what they need to protect their reproductive health.

- We are learning that quality makes a difference. The quality of family planning services affects whether clients can use methods effectively. Quality affects whether clients continue to use family planning. Quality even affects whether people start family planning at all. This handbook is meant to help providers offer good-quality family planning services.

Not every issue has been settled, however. New scientific findings will keep coming out. Sometimes these findings may cause controversy. They will need to be studied, interpreted, and discussed. Decisions will have to be made about changing family planning services and information. This process will help us to keep improving family planning methods and services.

The information in this handbook reflects the latest and most complete scientific understanding. This book represents the thinking of family planning leaders and experts around the world. Many of them helped prepare this book. Their names are listed on the next page.

Many people can use this book. Trainers can use it to plan and carry out training. Program managers can use it to update procedures and standards. Most of all, however, this book is meant for—and dedicated to—the providers all over the world who, every day, help people choose and use family planning.

The authors