

Family Planning in India, by K. G. Jolly, Hindustan Publishing Corporation (India), Delhi, 1986, xvi + 287 pp., hard bound, Price Rs. 115 (US \$ 17).

This monograph is addressed to an aspect of population growth that is of crucial importance to India at present. The findings are not only of interest to researchers in population but are also of relevance to development planners and programme managers.

The monograph analyses the progress of the family planning programme from 1969 to 1984 at state and district levels. This is one of the first studies to publish the results of a district level analysis of the family planning programme, its inputs and outputs and its linkages to social and economic factors although there have been other cross-sectional studies, at least at state level.

The major conclusions from this study are that in the long run the family planning programme has formed an important component of development, although there is considerable variation in the programme performance between states and between districts; that programme performance has crucial linkages with social development; and that the performance of the programme also depends on managerial efficiency in implementing it. In the light of these findings the author pleads for the adoption of a multifaceted approach to the crucial task of population growth reduction. This would require improvement in managerial efficiency and decentralisation of the programme to local bodies. Both the commitment as well as the training and skill of the peripheral programme personnel have to be improved for this purpose.

While knowledge of family planning methods is universal, their practice is still restricted due to lack of motivation towards a small family size. There are larger questions also of restructuring development in the interest of resolving the demographic dilemma. The close linkages between social variables and programme performance suggest that fertility behaviour could be influenced by the spread of literacy and education, by improving the social and economic status of women and their participation in productive work and by increasing the accessibility of primary health and maternal and child care services to the rural population.

These conclusions confirm the findings of various other cross-sectional studies on the relationship between contraceptive use and social and economic change. What is special about this monograph is the analysis of district level data on family planning use and the related social and economic factors. But it is difficult to establish causal relations at the meso level using cross-sectional data and regression methods. Therefore, it is not surprising that the author is unable to convincingly disentangle the proximate variables linking contraceptive use with social and economic factors. At this level of aggregation, many of the social variables used in the analysis serve more as social indicators and not as causal explanations of individual behaviour.

Mechanical application of regression techniques throughout this monograph

limits the usefulness of findings to some extent. For instance, the reasons for poor performance of some districts and the better performance of others is not fully explored.

The main thrust of the monograph is to analyse the programme performance in terms of social and economic indicators. Although the analysis extends from 1969 to 1979, the fertility impact of family planning use is not studied in depth.

It would have been worthwhile to discuss the various measures of programme performance such as the total acceptor rate, the acceptor equivalent sterilization and cumulative acceptance rate. The rationale behind these measures is not fully explained. While these measures could be adequate for assessing the quantum of programme output they cannot be regarded as measures of current use. This is particularly true for conventional contraceptive users since their percentage is added over the years. Conceptual explanation of these rates would have added to the meaningful interpretation of the results.

The classification of districts is based on all-India norms. While this is appropriate for the all-India analysis, for state level analysis it would have been better to adopt state norms in classifying districts into very good to very poor ones. For instance most of the districts in Maharashtra are classified as very good and most in Bihar as very poor. The all-India norms do not reflect the dispersal of districts within the state about its own mean.

Some useful indicators, at state and district levels, of the percentage of eligible acceptors by method are presented in the appendices. It is hoped that this exploratory analysis of district level performance is followed by deeper studies that bring out, on the one hand, the possible gains from better programme management and, on the other hand, the effective demand, in this voluntary programme, for family planning based on social change and economic development.

*Gokhale Institute of Politics and
Economics, Pune*

K. SIVASWAMY SRIKANTAN