



Commission on Population and Development – April 13, 2016

C-Fam (Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute) believes the stakes are high for the 2030 Agenda. It is vital that indicators be free of conceptual errors and political biases that divert resources away from much-needed interventions.

One critical aspect is national surveys and data on reproductive health. The wording and interpretation must be faithful to participants' intentions and not manipulated to benefit certain interests.

Some say that 225 million women have an “unmet need” for contraceptives and call for \$9.4 billion a year for family planning. But the “unmet need” concept is flawed, misused and diverts resources from interventions that save women's and children's lives.

The MDGs define, “women with unmet need are those who are [fertile] and sexually active but are not using any method of contraception, and report not wanting any more children or wanting to delay the next child.”

This doesn't measure either women's desire for or access to contraception.

Current Demographic and Health Surveys ask women whether they want a child in the next two years. Yes or no are the only answers allowed. Prior to 2003, surveys asked how strongly they felt about avoiding pregnancy.

From a quarter to more than half of women in sub-Saharan Africa who wanted to avoid pregnancy also said it would be “no problem” or “a small problem” if they became pregnant in the next few weeks.

The “unmet need” indicator ignores that women voluntarily choose not to use contraceptives. They expressed concern about side effects, personal opposition to using contraceptives, breastfeeding, or infrequent sex.

If family planning indicators are in the 2030 Agenda, they should be restricted to measuring existing contraceptive prevalence and self-reported demand for specific services or products.

Contraceptives deemed unsafe for use in wealthy countries should be precluded. Injectables like Depo Provera that increase risks of contracting HIV/AIDs, breast cancer and osteoporosis should be avoided.

Make childbirth safe. Prioritize maternal health so women can have safe pregnancies and delivery, and a good outcome for their child.