

Empowering Opportunities Through Conscientious Family Planning

Abstract

A plan for a three-fold approach to advancing public education about the critical importance of mindful family planning practices.

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Executive Summary

Despite advances in contraception and women's rights, roughly half of all pregnancies worldwide are unplanned, leading to severe consequences on a personal, societal, and environmental scale. To combat these effects, we present a three-pronged public outreach and education campaign aimed at promoting **Conscientious Family Planning (CFP)**. This campaign incorporates digital infographics, posters, and outlines for in-person presentations designed to target adolescents and young adults. Our comprehensive campaign will be divided into three approaches: How CFP Benefits Individuals, How CFP Benefits Society, and How CFP Benefits the Environment. By disseminating this information broadly, and making it accessible to demographics that would benefit most from it, we can create dramatic social, economic, and environmental benefits for both the individual and the community. Ultimately, **Conscientious Family Planning** is necessary for fostering a healthier, more sustainable future for generations to come.

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Introduction

For decades, the stresses placed on our environment and natural resources by rapid industrialization and global commercialization have been compounded by the exponential increase in the human population.

Despite medical advances in contraception and social advances in the rights and opportunities afforded to women in much of the world, a staggering 41.6% of pregnancies in the United States in 2019 were unplanned (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024) – substantiating claims by the United Nations that the roughly 50% rate of unplanned pregnancy worldwide constitutes a global crisis (United Nations Population Fund, 2022).

This reflects a general lack of conscientious family planning, with drastic consequences to individuals, society, and the environment.

The Facts of the Matter

Poor family planning can drastically affect the course of an individual's life by limiting opportunities for education and career advancement, as well as placing a strain on physical and mental health. According to a report by the United States Congress's Joint Economic Committee, "...college enrollment was 20 percent higher for women who had legal access to birth control than for those who did not." **Figure 1 shows the dramatic increase in admission of women into higher education following the legalization of birth control.** Women facing unplanned pregnancy – particularly in cases where multiple pregnancies occur in a short time frame - often receive little to no prenatal care, resulting in increased health risks and higher rates of both maternal and infant mortality (Stith and Wright).

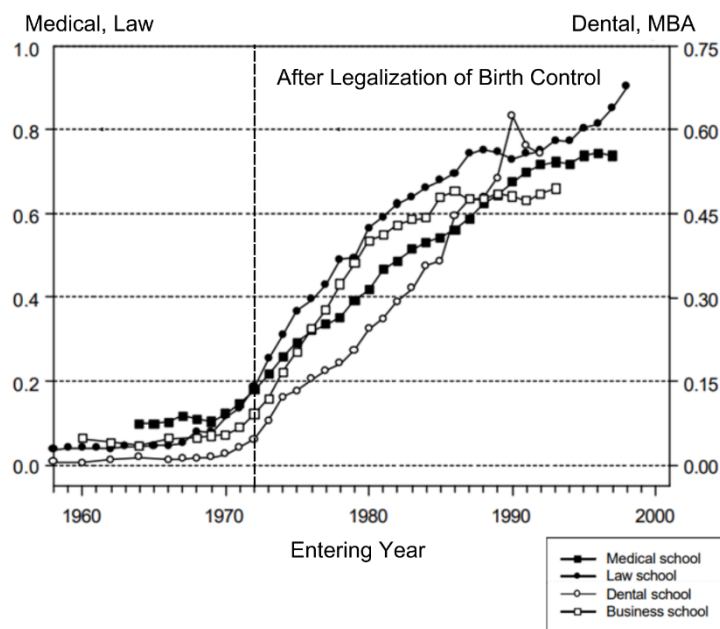


Figure 1. Ratio of Female to Male First-Year Students. Original graph modified to include birth control legalization date (Goldin, C., & Katz, L. F., 2002).

On a societal level, these effects become cumulative, leading to a less educated and less skilled workforce, higher rates of poverty and crime, and increased burdens on healthcare and social assistance programs. Shown in figure 2, women and men both have higher median wages in states with greater reproductive health access, significantly beating states with limited reproductive health access as well as the national average (Bahn, Kugler, Mahoney, Corley, & McGrew, 2024). According to an article published in the *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, the expansion of family planning services to lower-income women is one of the highest predictors of reductions in rates of violent crime and teen births (Colen, Ramey, & Browning, 2016). Preventing unplanned pregnancies and their associated costs results in huge savings in government expenditures: \$15.2 billion saved on Medicaid-covered maternity and infant care and on publicly funded medical care for children aged 13 to 60 months; \$409 million saved on Medicaid-covered care for miscarriages; \$44 million saved for abortion care (Frost, Sonfield, Zolna, & Finer, 2014).

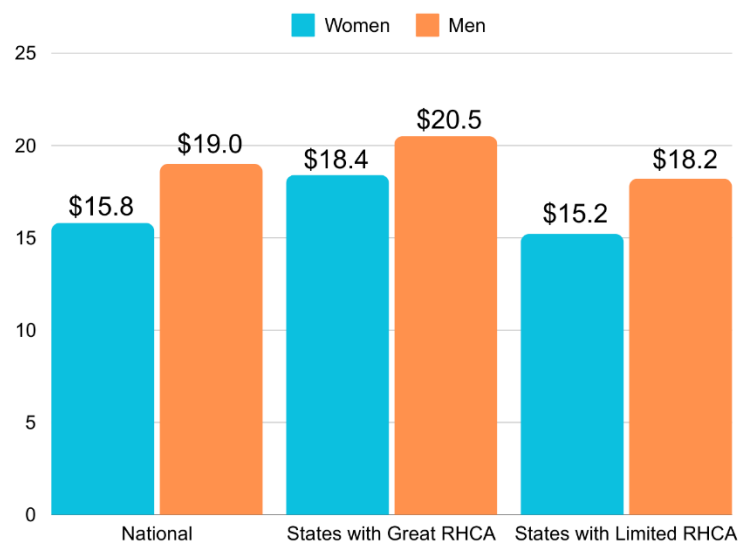


Figure 2. Median Hourly Income for Reproductive Age Men and Women in States with Great versus Limited Reproductive Health Care Access. Graph created with data from “*Linking reproductive health care access to labor market opportunities for women*” (Bahn, Kugler, Mahoney, Corley, & McGrew, 2024).

Extensive studies have shown countless connections between human population growth and degradation of the natural environment. Rampant commercialism, overconsumption and mismanagement of natural resources, waste generation, and industrial pollution are all severely exacerbated by increases in population. Fast urbanization can lead to situations where the infrastructure for these new urban areas is lacking, causing huge environmental concerns when systems such as waste disposal are underdeveloped. Family planning not only reduces such problems but has been found to be one of the lower cost ways of reducing carbon emissions (Starbird, Norton and Marcus, 2016). Figure 3 shows the effectiveness of a family planning program in slowing down rapid population growth.

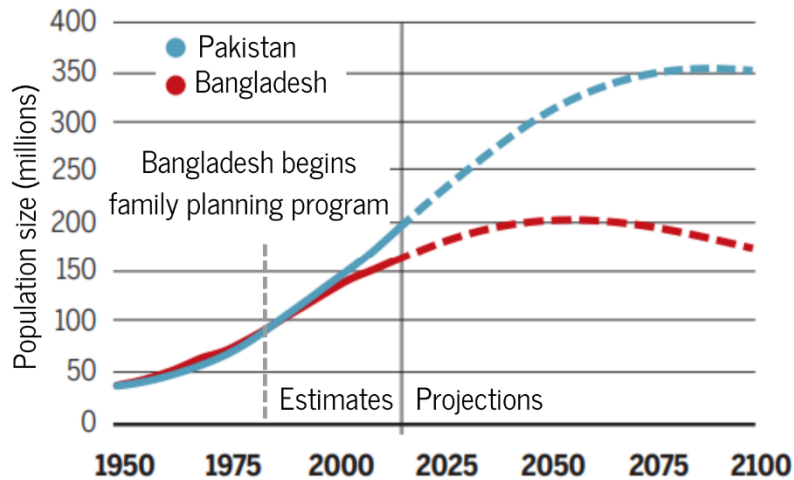


Figure 3. Population Estimates and Projections for Bangladesh and Pakistan. Original graph modified to include the year in which Bangladesh starts its family planning program (Bongaarts, J., & O'Neill, B. C., 2018).

Our Solution

In accordance with the request of the Department of Public Health for Crimson and Gray Research to help bring increased awareness to overlooked topics that would benefit the wellbeing of the community, our team has developed a plan for a structured, tri-approach public outreach and education campaign to be disseminated to the public through various methods and media.

Each campaign will consist of a Resource Packet containing ready-made materials designed to facilitate public outreach:

- Digital infographics to be disseminated via social media or other web-based channels
- Digital posters to be printed and displayed in public schools, libraries, community centers, medical offices, or other appropriate spaces
- Outlines for in-person presentations to be delivered by teachers, public health officials, or possibly volunteers from appropriate non-profit organizations
- Digital, print-friendly handouts with self-help materials (such as decision-making trees) and lists of resources for more information, as well as local health centers offering family planning services

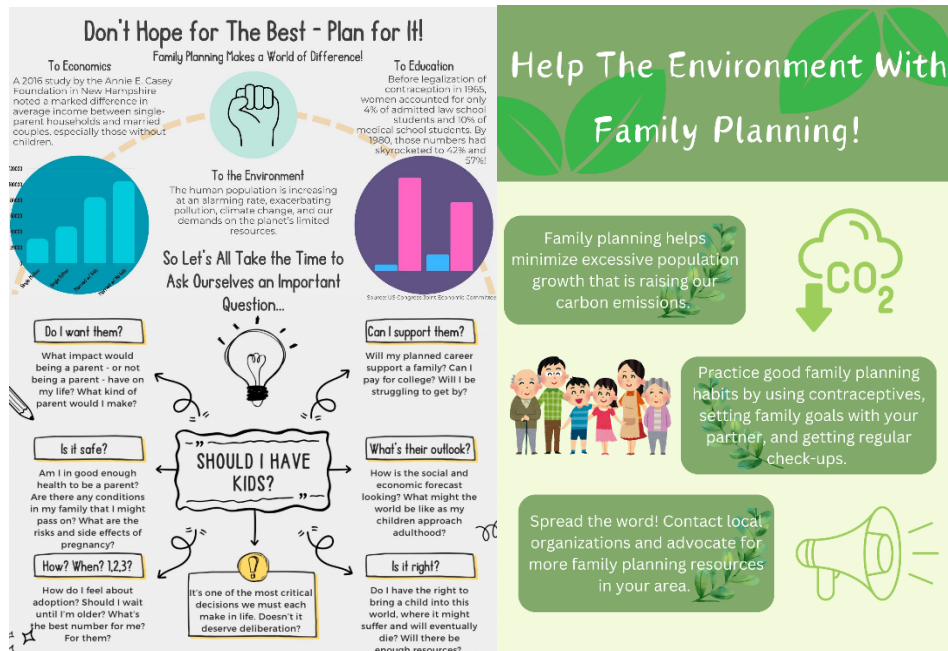


Figure 4 (Left) and Figure 5 (Right) are examples of the materials to be included in the resource packet. Figure 4 created by Evelyn Smith and Figure 5 created by Hunter Dang.

Though the material will be appropriate to the general community, it will be targeted mainly toward adolescents and young adults, as this age group is generally in the best position to derive the greatest benefit from the information. To maximize appeal to audiences of different values and priorities, our campaign will be divided into three different approaches.

Self-Interest Approach: How Does CFP Benefit Individuals?

- Increased educational and career opportunities
- Greater economic stability
- Avoids health risks associated with unplanned or mistimed pregnancy
- Better overall life outlook for children

Community-Minded Approach: How Does CFP Benefit Society?

- More educated and skilled workforce
- Savings in government spending on healthcare and social programs
- Reductions in poverty and crime rates

Earth-Friendly Approach: How Does CFP Benefit the Environment?

- Can slow or eventually reverse global human population growth
- Curtails destructive trends linked to rapid urbanization, consumerism, pollution, etc.
- Drastically reduces carbon footprint and waste production

The Takeaway

Many factors may contribute to the prevalence of unplanned pregnancy. In the developing world, lack of access to education and healthcare – often in addition to restricted legal and familial rights for women – contribute significantly to high fertility rates. These problems are also prevalent in – but certainly not **limited to – the** poorer classes of wealthier countries, where cultural attitudes and social behaviors (such as alcohol consumption) may also have an impact. The relative newness of safe, effective contraception is also a factor; it will take time for our perception of childbearing to shift from an inevitability to a matter of choice. But it *must* change.

Practicing good family planning can dramatically improve a person's economic opportunity, reduce health risks associated with childbearing and parenting, and decrease environmental footprint - all of which, in turn, hold economic and social benefits for the community through a more educated workforce, decreased healthcare costs, and greater sustainability.

Our proposed educational outreach program – based on copious and incontrovertible evidence – is ideally suited to the Department of Public Health's planned initiative to raise public awareness of overlooked health matters.

It can easily be implemented by department personnel or volunteers with no need for specialized training, through existing digital and in-person channels, and with fairly minimal expenditure of funds.

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