

THE WORLD FERTILITY SURVEY

The International Statistical Institute (ISI) in collaboration with the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) and the United Nations will undertake an international research programme, entitled The World Fertility Survey (WFS), supported by the Agency for International Development (AID) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) with additional support in one kind or another from national Governments.

The basic aim of the survey is to provide scientific information (a) to enable each participating country to describe and interpret its human fertility and (b) to compare fertility and the factors which affect it in different regions of the world.

The WFS will, in general, be a single-round survey of households so selected as to provide a probability sample, preferably one capable of providing national estimates which may be conducted independently or may be linked with parallel projects which some countries have already envisioned.

The WFS will enable the Governments concerned not only to acquire technically sound knowledge on fertility and reproductive behaviour of their population, but also to develop survey techniques and organizational capacity for demographic and other social science research which in some countries does not exist.

Each national survey within the WFS programme is expected to adopt a common set of core items, although there will be enough flexibility to take into account local circumstances. Among the factors to be explored are age of respondent, birth history, pregnancy history (if feasible) and marital history; factors immediately affecting fertility levels such as prolonged breast feeding; attitudes about family size; and economic factors such as occupation, educational attainment and other cultural characteristics.

Country cooperation and acceptance of responsibility for carrying out a high quality survey is essential to the success of the WFS programme. When a country agrees to participate in the WFS, the WFS Central Staff will request that it concur in a basic agreement, to be negotiated with the Central Staff, governing its survey. The country will be asked to submit a schedule detailing whatever technical and financial assistance may be required for carrying out the survey. Depending on the needs of individual countries, the WFS programme anticipates being able to offer technical and/or financial assistance for any phase of the survey forms of assistance to participating countries. Short term consultants, in various fields of expertise such as sampling or data processing will be provided. Long term expert assistance in the form of consultants who will reside in the participating country can also be made available.