Contraception and Unmet Needs in Africa :
Use and Non-Use of Contraception in Africa

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Introduction

- Contraception, as we define nowadays, is pretty recent concept. If we can agree that the northern hemisphere has accepted modern contraception in the 1970', the southern has been left behind to this extend.
- The point of this study is not only to have an overview of the contraceptive's use in several developing countries, but also to understand the non-use, in order to, finally, see if a better indicator could not be used.

Design

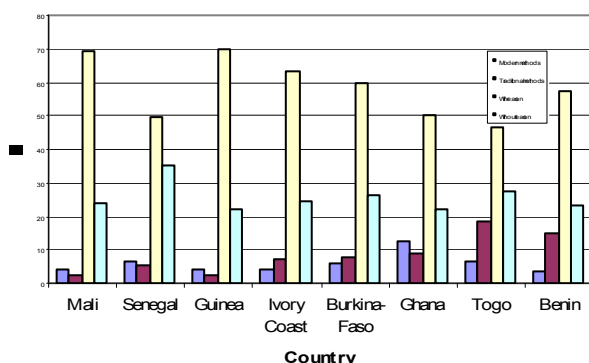*Defining the correct population towards contraception.*

- We can divide the population of women according to their contraceptive behaviour into 3 sub-populations:
➢ The users (natural and modern methods).
➢ The non-users not in need of contraception.
➢ The non-users in need of contraception according to their birth preferences, the so called "unmet need population".

- The three sub-categories of women (users, non-users with reasons, and non-users without reasons) can be listed in a table which provides a very accurate overview of the use and non-use of contraception.
In order to illustrate so, we will use the example of Western African countries.

Table 1. Western Africa. Current contraceptive use, married women aged 15-49.

	Users			Non-users			nd	Total
	Modern methods	Tral methods	Total	With reason	Without reason	Total		
Mali	4,2	2,5	6,7	69,0	24,1	93,0	0,3	100,0
Senegal	6,6	5,3	11,9	49,4	35,5	84,8	3,3	100,0
Guinea	4,4	2,2	6,6	70,0	22,1	92,1	1,3	100,0
Ivory Coast	4,4	7,0	11,4	63,2	24,2	87,5	1,1	100,0
Burkina-Faso	5,8	7,5	13,4	59,5	26,5	86,0	0,6	100,0
Ghana	12,8	9,1	21,9	50,3	21,9	72,2	5,9	100,0
Togo	6,3	18,3	24,6	46,7	27,5	74,2	1,2	100,0
Benin	3,6	14,9	18,6	57,2	23,5	80,8	0,7	100,0

Source DHS, Macro Int'l

Graph 1. Western Africa. Current Contraceptive Use women aged 15-49.

Bibliography

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Discussion

A try for a new and accurate indicator: "The coverage's degree"

- As we admit that the contraceptive use might be not such a good indicator of the protected or unprotected population against unwanted pregnancies, let's consider the non-users without reasons not to use a better one.
- This population, the so called "unmet need" population is showing the proportion of females actually in need of contraception accordingly to their birth preferences.
But, even a better indicator might be able to be used: "the coverage degree".
- The breakdown of women would be then done as such:
➢The ones who cannot get involuntary pregnant (those who are sexually inactive, sterile, already pregnant, and want a child within 2 years)
➢ The ones who can potentially be pregnant (users of contraception and non-users with no reasons not to use).

- T he point is here to define a degree of coverage of the population at risk of unwanted pregnancies.
- This indicator gives a better understanding of the protection against unwanted pregnancies tan any contraceptive use figure.
- Such an indicator would be calculated by considering the number of women using contraception in a specific population and the total number of women who do not want to become pregnant in the considered population.
- The formula would be as follow:

$$\frac{\text{Number of women using contraception} \times 100}{\text{Total number of women who to not want to be pregnant}}$$

- Hypothetically, in a country where the contraceptive use would be null, still the population of females could be totally protected against unwanted pregnancies if they were all falling under one of these categories: sexually inactive, sterile, pregnant or in desire of a child. In this case using a figure as the contraceptive use would be completely useless... as equal to 0%, and as would be analysed as an alarming proportion...The coverage degree (in that hypothetic case equal to 100%) would be a far better indicator. Where the contraceptive use would show a problematic and alarming figure of 0%, would be translated as a population not protected at all against unwanted pregnancies, the coverage degree shows basically the opposite, this population is fully covered against the risk of **unwanted** pregnancies.

Table 2. Western Africa. Current contraceptive use, non-use and coverage degree

	Users	Non-users with no reasons	Coverage degree
Mali	6,7	24,1	21,7
Senegal	11,9	35,5	25,1
Guinea	6,5	22,1	22,9
Ivory Coast	11,4	24,2	31,9
Burkina-Faso	13,4	26,5	33,6
Ghana	21,9	21,9	50,0
Togo	24,6	27,5	47,1
Benin	18,6	23,5	44,1

Conclusion

Contraception is much more than using contraceptives... It shows interesting aspects of societies. Aspects that easily can be misinterpreted if only considering the contraceptive's use rate.
By using the "coverage's degree" indicator, the population protected against unwanted pregnancies can then be well defined.

However, in order to improve the analysis of contraception, we also need an "history of contraception" all along women's reproductive life. Such data would make possible some longitudinal cohort analysis, which would be a real improvement in the demographic analysis of contraception.