

## **UNMET NEEDS – PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES FOR RURAL WOMEN IN SRI LANKA**

I. Wanniarachchi\*

*PGIHS, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

\*isharawanniarachchi@gmail.com

The ambitious aspiration of the United Nations is to achieve SDGs for the whole world, in which a high level of well-being standard for reproductive health (Goal Five) is set to be achieved by 2030. Even though there are various local and international interventions to reach this objective, developing countries like Sri Lanka still face the unsolved issues in the health sector, and the situation with regard to sexual and reproductive health in particular is very complex. The finding that at least one in eight married women in developing countries has not received any access to family planning has proven this. Against this background, the main objective of this research was to examine the nature of the awareness among rural women regarding family planning. The secondary objectives were to examine the way that the issues in family planning shaped the health situation of the family and to identify the different levels and forms of the intervention on the part of the social worker with a view to facilitating the solving of the problem related to family planning. A field study was conducted in this regard in the Okkampitiya area in Monaragala District. Based on purposive sampling, 45 respondents (married women) were selected for the study. A set of qualitative data collection methods-Case studies and in-depth interviews-were utilized for primary data collection. The key sources of secondary data were official documents and representations. According to the findings, it was revealed that awareness of rural women regarding the necessity and importance of family planning was insubstantial. Some had knowledge gained from peer groups on traditional family planning methods. It was only a handful of women who had tested the modern family planning methods introduced in maternity clinics. It was revealed that the myths and beliefs regarding these methods are nurtured by culture. As a result of the power imbalance related to gender, males dominate the decision-making process with regard to family planning, while females consider family planning as a responsibility of married women. Nevertheless, the main reason for this situation is the lack of open discussions regarding sexual and reproductive health, which limits knowledge transmission on family planning. Rural women have become a vulnerable group due to unequal division of resources and other socio-economic factors. Therefore, the role of social workers who work based on social justice to ensure the betterment of underprivileged individuals and communities has become a prominent need in the society. A social worker can be an educator, motivator, trainer, coordinator, counselor and advocator. The interventions made at different levels in the form of these roles can reduce or eliminate the problem of the lack of awareness regarding family planning. This paper analyzes the ways in which group work can be used as a social work intervention method to overcome family planning issues.

*Keywords:* Reproductive Health, Family Planning, Rural Women