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Utilization of Reproductive and Child Health Services in Tribal Areas of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT There is wide variation among the tribals of India living in contrasting conditions with different life styles, environment and socio-cultural traditions and practices. Andhra Pradesh is homeland of nearly thirty-three tribal groups. Most of these communities are found inhabiting in North and North- Eastern regions of the State. A number of factors namely inadequate household food security, inadequate access to health services, traditional beliefs, economic constraints and inadequate care of women and children made the tribals vulnerable to health and nutrition stand point. The wide heterogeneity in their development is reflected in the health and nutritional status of the tribal population with some sections well fed and other left grossly undernourished. In addition, ecological degradation aggravates the situation in these areas. The information on the health and nutrition status, the access to and utilization of available health services for the tribal population is scanty. Therefore the present survey is an attempt to study reproductive and child health and nutrition in tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. The study was carried out in 10 tribal ICDS projects spread over the State. In each project 10 Anganwadi centres or more (to cover 10,000 populations) were covered for survey. The study revealed that only 21.0 % pregnant women were registered for ANC before 16th week of pregnancy. Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (65.0 %) usually registered the women for ANC and the place of antenatal check up was mostly home (30%) followed by hospital (Govt.16.0 % or private 17.0 %) and Anganwadi center (12.0 %). Only 15.0 % were institutional deliveries, while among the home deliveries 40.0 % used Disposable Delivery Kits (DDK). About 79.0 % of the mothers initiated breast feeding within 24 hours of delivery, while about 8.0 % started breast feeding on 2nd day and rest did it only on third day or after. About 21% of the mothers stated that they discarded colostrum mainly on the elder's advice. About 49% of mothers initiated complementary foods before 6 months of age and the food was mostly semisolid (52.0 %) or solids (45.0 %). Immunization status revealed that about 71.0 % of children were fully immunized and only 36.0 % and 8.0 % of the children (1 - 3 years) were covered for Vit.A and National Nutritional Anaemia Prophylaxis programme respectively. Sixty percent of children (0 - 72 months) were in different grades of protein energy malnutrition. The infant mortality (85 per 1000 live births) and maternal mortality rates (10 per 1000 live births) were higher as compared to the state and national average. Thus, to achieve the set of goals of either for health or nutrition, there is a need to improve the out reach and quality of health services in the tribal areas.