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**Title of the Study** : Study of the Accessibility, Availability and Utilization of  
Reproductive Child Health (RCH) Services in Public and  
Private Sector by Rural Households in Manipur (A Case  
Study of Bishnupur)

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## **Abstract**

Health care is one of the most neglected aspects among the various service provisions in India. Majority of the population in the country suffers from one form of ailment or the other. The present study takes a holistic view of the RCH programme in terms of not only examining its various components, namely maternal health, neo natal and child health, family planning, adolescent health and control of RTIs/STIs, but also tries to assess the programme from the perspective of the primary stakeholder, the eligible women. It tries to examine the accessibility, availability and utilization of the RCH programme in the context of women in rural areas in Bishnupur district in Manipur. The RCH programme was introduced in the State of Manipur in the year 2000. Since its introduction, there has been a certain level of increase in the awareness regarding RCH and its components among the women of Manipur. However, there still remain a large percentage of women who are not aware about RCH and its facilities. The study revolves around the basic conceptual framework of the RCH programme comprising its various components (i) Reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality (ii) Reduction of infant morbidity and mortality (iii) Reduction of under 5 morbidity and mortality (iv) Promotion of adolescent health and (v) Control of Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

The study is descriptive in nature based on information elicited on different dimensions of the RCH programme from primary as well as secondary stakeholders. While the primary stakeholders were the health service beneficiaries, the secondary stakeholders were the health service providers. The sample for the study comprised of around 336 respondents out of which 300 were eligible women. It underlines the fact that the extent and nature of reproductive health problems, and the actions taken for prevention/management of these problems through easy availability and accessibility of services especially to poor women in the rural areas, is a major issue especially in the context of Manipur.

The study has highlighted some of the major issues that hamper the progress of health services in villages. Health and allied services such as maternal & child health, nutrition, sanitation, safe drinking water and healthcare infrastructure are very poor in the villages. Non-availability of basic medicines and medical facilities, lack of quality infrastructure and dearth of qualified medical functionaries in the centers is another major concern. The rural population does not have access to specialty hospitals as they are located in cities. Even if they do, they face problems of reaching the hospitals on time. The place of delivery is an important determinant for reducing the risk of infant and maternal deaths and assistance during delivery is an important component in RCH care services. Women prefer to deliver babies at their homes because there is lack of health facilities or transportation to such facilities in the area. Other important reasons include inadequate health care services in the village, lack of infrastructure in the health center, shortage of medicines, non-availability of doctors and nurses, especially during emergencies.

Post-natal care of both mother and child is a very important aspect in the proper upbringing of the child as it provides mothers with the strength to take proper care of the child. Immunization forms one of the most important and cost effective strategies for the prevention of childhood sicknesses and disabilities and is thus a basic need for all children. Different types of vaccinations are available to protect and immunize children from infections and other diseases. However, most mothers were not aware of the health related services like mother and child immunization, ante natal care, post natal care, Janani Suraksha Yojana and modern family planning methods. Their children have not been immunized from all vaccinations because there is lack of awareness about immunization and its importance, lack of accessibility to health facilities and so on. Moreover, mothers do not have time to visit health facilities as they are engaged in household work.

It can be finally concluded that the impact of RCH has been rather minimal in the study area because of both demand and supply factors. There is not only poor availability and accessibility of services for the poor rural women in the sample district, but there is also lack of awareness about the RCH programme due to which utilisation level is low and services are not demanded. A two-pronged approach would be needed in order to ensure that RCH programme becomes impactful.