

Delivering Reproductive Health Services in Rural Andhra Pradesh. Insights from the Field.

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Summary & Conclusions:

This qualitative study of Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) program in Andhra Pradesh sought to identify its strengths, weaknesses and gain insights for future action. Twenty “ideal typical” Primary Health Centre Medical (PHCMOs) officers were randomly selected from a list of 110 “ideal typical” PHCMOs nominated by the District Medical & Health Officers (DMHOs). Experience, perceptions and insights of PHCMOs about RCH program implementation was sought through focus group discussions (FGDs), group discussions, and a consensus development process. Quite a few public health insights emerged out of this consultation.

All the PHC Medical Officers felt that education in general and health education in particular is a key input to improve the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) status. The need for creating awareness on the issue of early age at marriage and its adverse effects on health was highlighted.

Structural changes in the public health care delivery system is required to improve impact of RCH programs. Significant among these are ; (a) clarification and redefinition of the role of PHC, (b) Reduction in population coverage by sub centres, (c) comprehensive review of sub center locations to improve their accessibility, (d) redefinition of MPHA-Male role and their redeployment, (e) continuing education of health care professionals at all levels, (f) improved logistics, and (g) induction or development of managerial skills for program implementation.

Role of PHC should be clearly defined. The participants recommended that the PHC should perform three major roles, namely, (a) public health service, (b) ambulatory medical care and (c) day surgeries. To improve availability of Health care professionals (HCPs) at sub centers, the participants recommended local recruitment of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs). The PHCMOs suggested to reduce the population coverage of a sub center to around 3000 from present 5000. Accessibility of sub centers locations need to improve for better health service delivery. Redeployment and redefining the Multipurpose Health Assistant- Male (MPHA-M) role is recommended.

All the participants expressed need for conducting refresher’s training for PHCMOs, ANMs and lab technicians. Irregular and inadequate supply of drugs, equipment and stationary is affecting the health care services. Poor managerial skills at various levels was identified as a major problem in implementing the program.

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