

COVID 19 Impact: 421,601 unintended pregnancies, 147,925 unsafe abortions and 309 maternal deaths likely in Uttar Pradesh in 2020

Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India study finds Family Planning program to take a 15-23% hit in 2020 across India

Lucknow, 14 May 2020: An unintended fallout of the nationwide lockdown since 25th March is the inability of millions of women to access their choice of contraception. The lockdown has meant access to and use of contraception has been compromised to a large extent. In line with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India's advisory, public facilities have suspended provision of sterilizations and IUCDs till further notice. Curbs on movement have made access to over the counter contraceptives, Condoms, OCPs and ECPs difficult.

In an attempt to understand the impact, Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India (FRHS India) a leading NGO and the country's largest provider of clinical family planning services in the private/NGO sector has released a policy brief highlighting the estimates of loss of services and impact on family planning program for India and in three states-Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

FRHS India has made use of secondary sources such as Health Management Information System (HMIS), Social Marketing Statistics and retail audit data to arrive at the potential loss of sales and services in 2020 and resultant impact on health indicators.

The findings do not present a positive picture. At a national scale, in the most likely scenario (where clinical family planning services operate at full capacity by September 2020 and commercial sales of OTC contraceptives are able to resume in a phased manner by third week of May) it is estimated that **25.6 million couples** would have not been able to access contraception services during the period of the lockdown and weeks leading up to complete normalcy i.e. September 2020 which is likely to result in an additional **2.38 million unintended pregnancies, 679,864 child births, 1.45 million abortions** (including **834,042 unsafe abortions**) and **1,743 maternal deaths**.

FRHS India estimates that **5.80 million couples in Uttar Pradesh** would not be able to access contraceptives resulting in **421,601 unintended pregnancies, 120,580 live births, 256,338 abortions (147,925 unsafe abortions)** and **309 maternal deaths in the state. There will be a loss of 42,475 tubal ligations, 133,027 IUCDs, 102,053 doses of injectable contraceptives, 2.56 million OCPs, 239,448 ECPs and 112.77 million condoms** in 2020.

If the disruption continues for longer, the impact will worsen. The worst case scenario Uttar Pradesh is likely to see is **527,227 unintended pregnancies, 150,790 live births, 184,985 unsafe abortions and 387 maternal deaths**. In the worst case scenario with slower and phased availability of FP services, a total of **5.9 million couples** in Uttar Pradesh would be unable to access contraception services.

"The overall adverse impact on FP programme in India in 2020 is estimated to be between -15% to -23% in terms of Couple Years of Protection compared to 2019" shared **VS Chandrashekar, Chief**

Executive Officer, Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India, The disruption in family planning services during the lockdown will result in increased demand for sterilization and abortion services once the lockdown is eased/ lifted. That can be an added pressure on our health systems and can be overwhelming. This situation is likely to be further exacerbated in Uttar Pradesh, due to the large number of young migrant labor force returning from other states. They are likely to stay at home and in their villages for the next few months and their contraceptive needs, particularly spacing methods, needs to be secured” said Chandrashekar.

FRHS India’s recommendations in managing this adverse impact include: a) Improving the readiness of public and private health systems to meet the surge in demand for FP and abortion services. b) Developing and disseminating changes to clinical service delivery protocols in light of COVID 19 and procuring required supplies, consumables, drugs etc. c) Ensuring availability of MA drugs at chemists by advising states to remove unnecessary barriers on its sale. d) Expand contraceptive choice by introducing Implants in public sector. e) Remove restrictions on advertising of OTC contraceptives particularly ECPs and Condoms f) Strengthen the involvement of social marketing organizations and private/NGO service delivery organizations by addressing challenges and mitigating the losses incurred by them. “If proactive measures are not taken, the significant gains made by India and the state of Uttar Pradesh, in population stabilization and reducing maternal mortality could be compromised” Chandrashekar added. The loss of services and access to contraception can have serious implications for the family planning program and should see a commensurate response from the government.

Attached National Policy brief

Attached Bihar Policy brief

About Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India

Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India is a leading Indian Non Governmental Organization working since 2009 to enable women and girls to exercise their reproductive rights and choice. FRHS India is India’s No. 1 provider of clinical family planning services in the NGO and the private sector. Through public-private partnerships with the state governments of Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, FRHS India works towards improvement in accessibility and availability of quality family planning services in the states. In 2019, FRHS India served 1,40,344 clients with sterilization, 20,093 clients with IUCD and offered safe abortion services to 824 clients. FRHS India also provided information and counselled 1, 82, 513 clients in 2019 and prevented 82,464 unintended pregnancies, averted 29,406 unsafe abortions and 64 maternal deaths.

For more information: <http://www.frhsi.org.in/index1.php>

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