

A Case Study :

## Reproductive performance of Garo women in Meghalaya

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The present paper reflects the reproductive behaviour of Garo women of Meghalaya tribe. The main objective was to examine the reproductive performance and awareness on contraceptive methods and factors influencing reproductive behaviour. The study was conducted at West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya among hundred married women in the age group of 20 to 35 years. A self-structured interview schedule was prepared to elicit specific information on reproductive performance and birth control measures adopted and it was found that the fertility rate was high and awareness on contraceptive method was poor. At the same time, it was observed that educational level had little influence on use of contraception.

The scenario of Indian population is alarming. The advances in medical and health care have reduced the death rate in India. However, the birth rate still remains high, adding upto the existing population. The population of 35 million in India as per census 1951 had increased to 1 billion by 2001. This rapid increase in population has become one of the serious problems concerned by demographers all over the world. High fertility strains the budgets of poor families, reducing available resources to feed, educate, and provide health care to children (Pati, 2002).

The national population policy 2000, adopted by the Government of India has set as its immediate objective task of addressing need for contraception in order to achieve the total fertility rate down to replacement level by the year 2010. However, the fertility rate especially in North East India is still very high and Meghalaya has been ranked as second highest fertility rate (3.8) next to Bihar (4) in India (NFHS 3). In this context, it

is felt necessary to have understanding of factors associated for high fertility rate. The present paper highlights factors influencing the reproductive behaviour of the Garo women of Meghalaya. The Garos who are also known as the Achiks are basically hill tribesmen. The Garos are one of the largest groups of tribes of North East and are very widely scattered. They make up about 30% of the population of the state of Meghalaya. They once inhabited the northern reaches called Garoland in Tibet bordering China (Sangma, 2006).

Thus, the main objective was to examine the reproductive performance and factors influencing reproductive behaviour of Garo women and to find awareness on contraceptive method. The study was conducted at Rongram block of West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. A total sample of hundred married women in the age group of 20 to 35 years having at least one living child was selected randomly from 10 villages. A self structured interview schedule was prepared to elicit specific information on reproductive performance and birth control measure. The data were consolidated, tabulated and analysed systematically using mean, SD and chi-square.

### Age at menarche:

The onset of menarche among the respondents varied from 12 to 15 years. Half of the respondent tribal women attained puberty at the age of 12 years while about one third of the sample women had their first menstruation at 13 yrs of age followed with 14 years by 12 per cent of the women. Only four per cent of them had attained puberty at 15 years. The mean age of menarche for the total women was 12.7 yrs  $\pm$ 0.116 (Table 1).

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