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Emerging Social Issues Division

Social Policy and Population Section

### *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*

**Article**    **The Inaccessibility and Utilization of Antenatal Health-Care Services in Balkh Province of Afghanistan**

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**Abstract**    The study assesses the level of and differentials in utilization of antenatal care services in the Balkh province of Afghanistan. Data for this study came from a randomly selected household survey, conducted in Balkh province in August 2006, which provided information on the socio-demographic characteristics of households and the utilization of health services during pregnancy. Antenatal care service was understood as a package of services such as measuring weight and height, taking blood pressure, conducting urine and blood tests, prescribing tetanus toxoid injection, iron supplementation and providing counselling services. A total of 495 women, who had given birth two years prior to the survey, were interviewed. Findings revealed significant gaps in the utilization of antenatal care services by accessibility to health facilities. While the differences in use of such services by education and involvement in economic activity were noticeable, the utilization was lower among the poor than non-poor, among younger than older women and in urban compared with rural communities. Multi-variate analysis showed that illiterate and working women, who lived in remote villages with limited health facilities, were significantly less likely to receive antenatal care services than others. The study argues that expanding outreach health services in inaccessible remote areas has the potential to raise the coverage of services and significantly reduce the accessibility-related inequality in the utilization of antenatal care in Afghanistan.

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