

Expanding and Strengthening the Public Sector Contraceptive Basket with Progestin-Only Pills in India

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Significance/Background

About 20% of the world's married couples with an unmet need for contraception live in India.

- International data over a 27-year period show that expansion of the contraceptive method mix in low- and middle-income countries has a positive relationship with contraceptive use.
- Family planning (FP) is positioned as a critical intervention for reducing maternal and child mortality under the National Health Mission, with a focus on increasing access, expanding choices, and improving the quality of care.
- In revised WHO Medical Eligibility Criteria (MEC 2015) for contraceptives, progestin-only pills (POPs) changed from Category 3 to Category 2 for women < 6 weeks postpartum and breastfeeding, signifying that POP can be initiated in the immediate postpartum period.
- Based on the WHO recommendation, the Government of India approved the use of POPs in the country.

Program Intervention

POPs were introduced at 52 public health facilities within five districts in five states.

- One district in each state was selected using key FP indicators.
- 274 facility-level providers providing FP and maternity services were trained on service provision of POPs.
- All facilities were provided POP commodities by the program.

Methodology

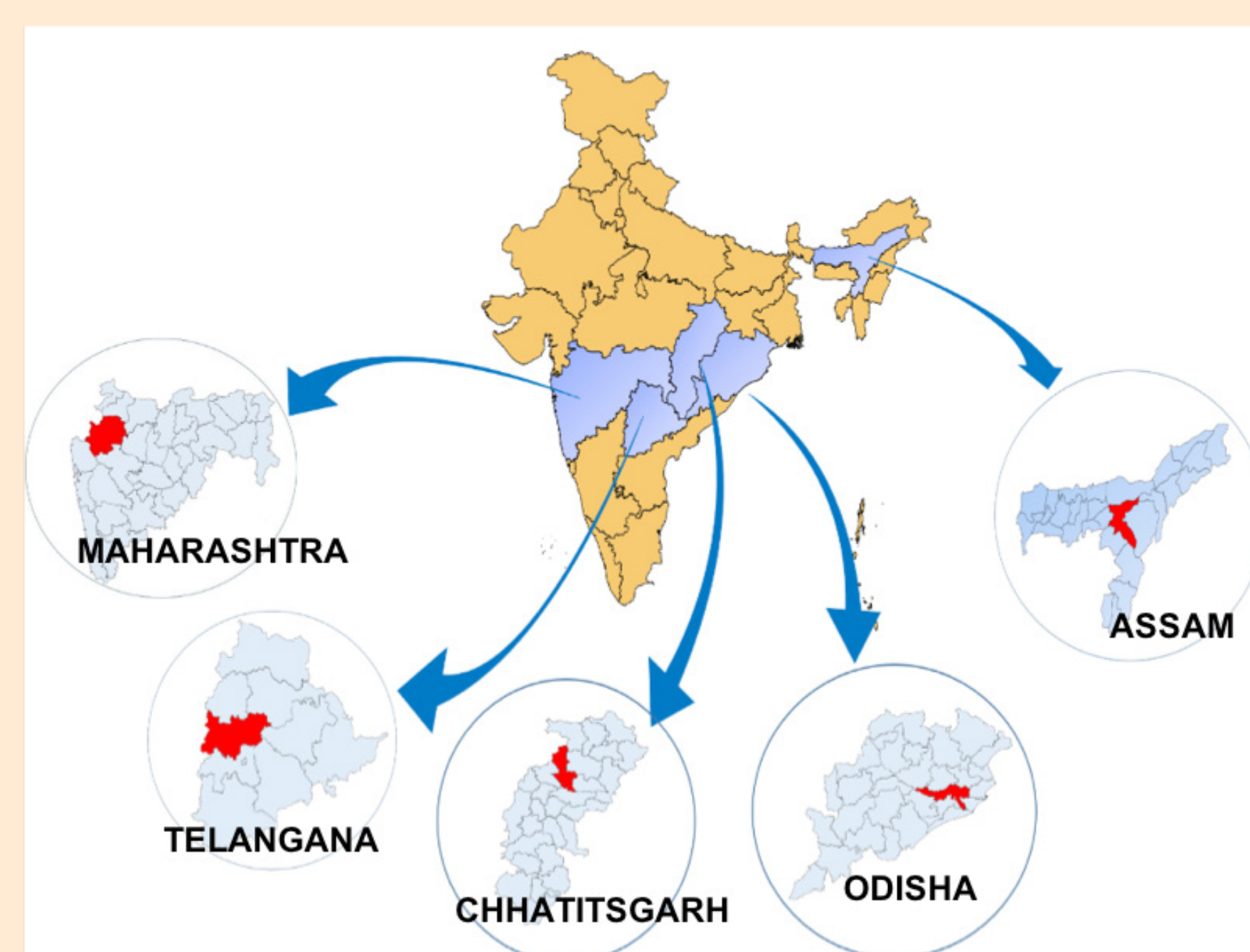
- All women delivering in selected 52 facilities were counseled on all available FP methods at the facility.
- This included the newly introduced POPs starting in April 2017.
- Each client making an informed choice for POP received seven packets of POPs.

Results

From April 2017 to June 2018, 3,514 women voluntarily accepted POPs.

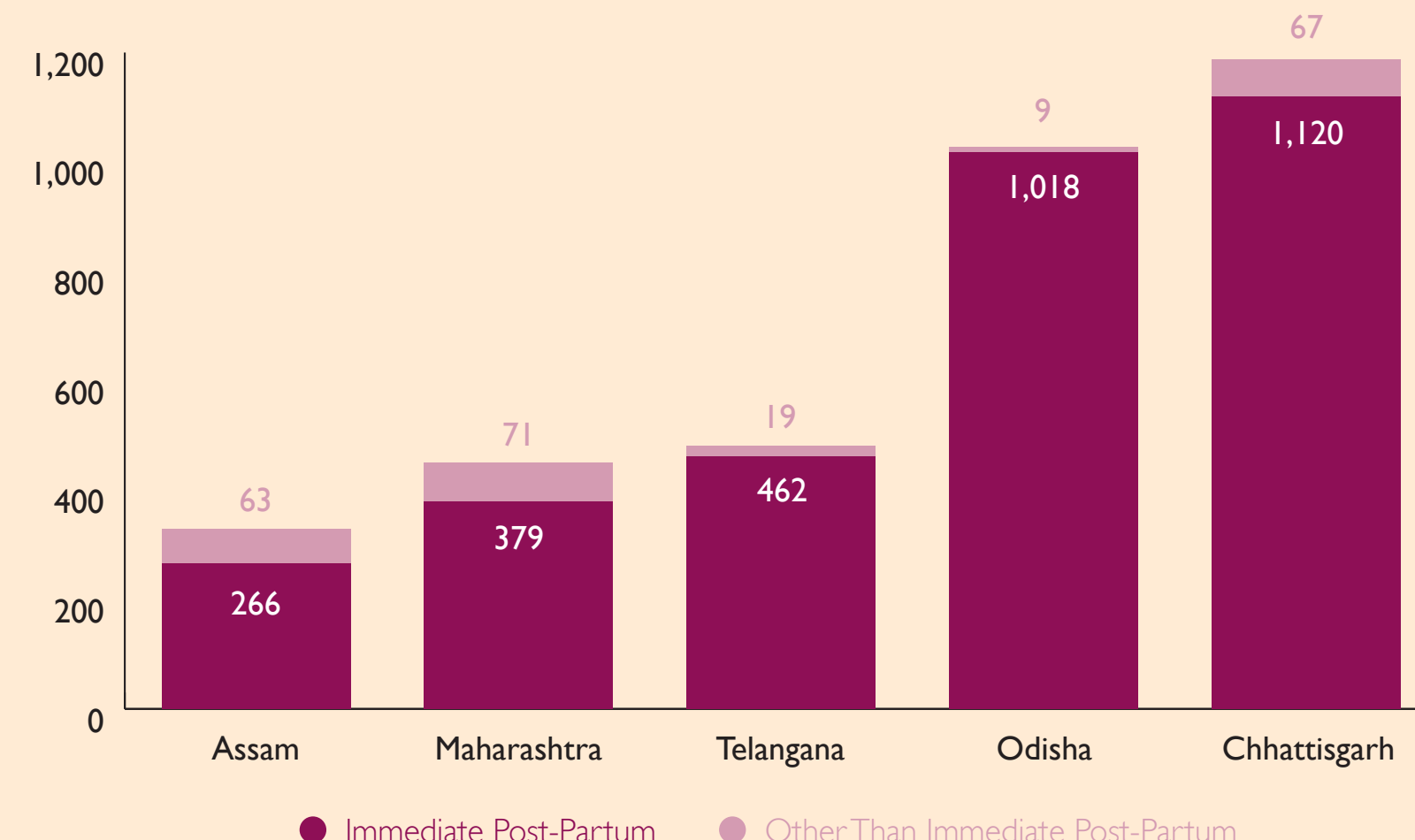
- Of these, 3,278 were postpartum women. These 3,278 women represented 2.7% of the total number of women (120,822) who delivered at the program focus facilities. (Note that the number of women who accepted POPs is larger than the number due for follow-ups because some women's follow-up dates were later than June 2018.)
- The first follow-up was scheduled for 1 month after date of acceptance.
 - 3,474 acceptors were due for follow-up.
 - 2,797 (81%) were followed-up.
 - 96% were continuing the method.
- The second follow-up was due 3 months after acceptance.
 - 3,125 acceptors were due for follow-up.
 - 2,171 (69%) were followed-up.
 - 93% were continuing the method.
- The third follow-up was due 6 months after acceptance.
 - 2,713 acceptors were due for follow-up.
 - 1,773 (65%) were followed-up.
 - 86% were continuing the method.
- 508 POP acceptors had discontinued POP use as of June 2018.
 - 107, 151, and 250 discontinued at 1, 3, and 6 months, respectively.
 - Of the 508 known discontinued users, 252 (49.6%) provided a reason for discontinuation.
 - 35.3% discontinued due to family reasons.
 - 23.4% opted for other methods of contraception.
 - 21.4% were unwilling to continue and provided no specific reason.
 - 9.5% discontinued due to bleeding, menstrual problems, or dizziness.
 - 1.2% wanted pregnancy.
 - 9.1% forgot to take the medicine.

Intervention Sites

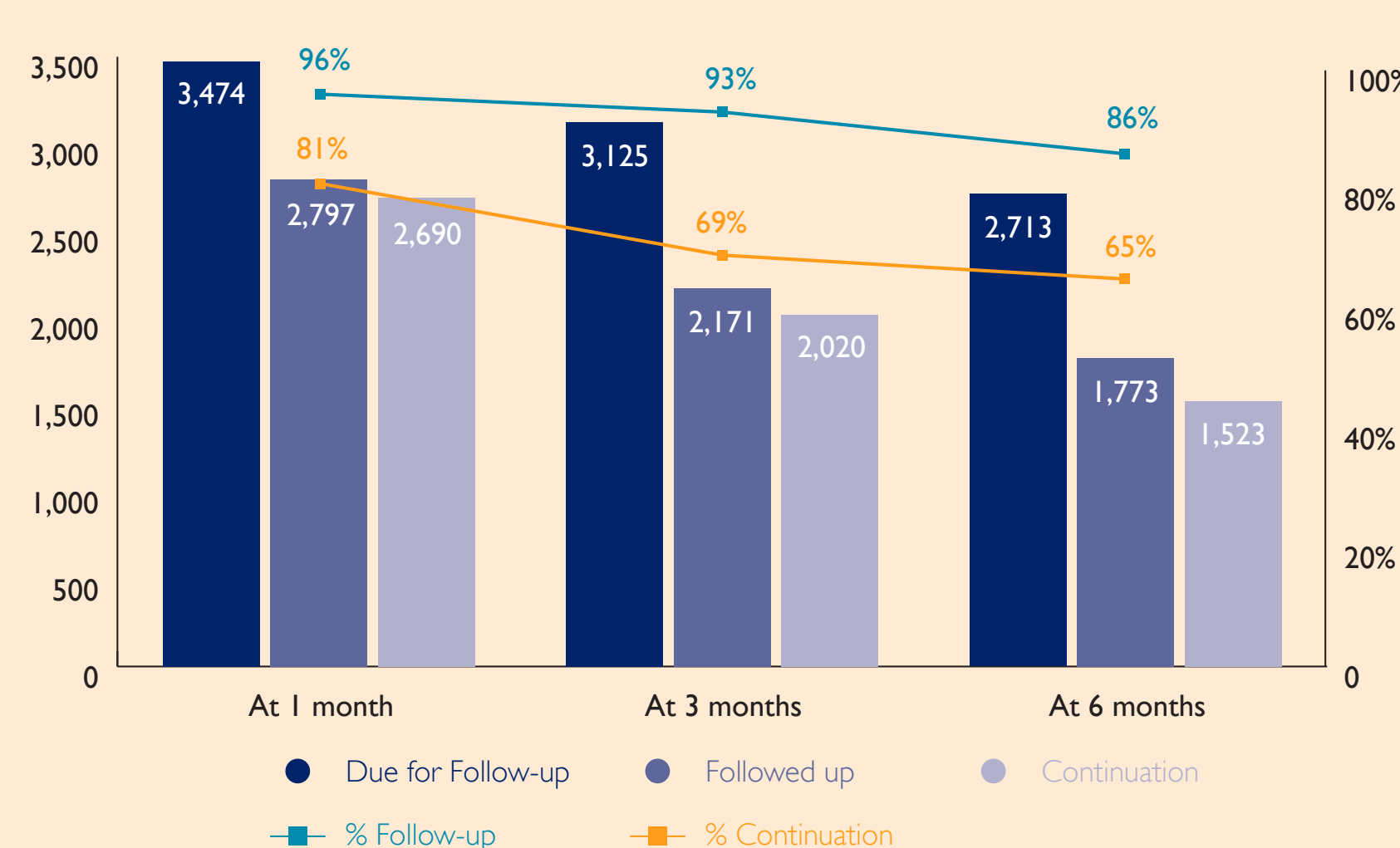


State	Districts
Odisha	Cuttack
Chhattisgarh	Bilaspur
Maharashtra	Nasik
Telangana	Sangareddy, Siddipet, Medak
Assam	Nagaon

Voluntary Acceptance of POP by State (Apr 2017 to June 2018)



POP Client Follow-Up and Continuation (Apr 2017 to June 2018)



Program Implications

The current FP basket under the national program in India offers limited modern contraceptive options. In adding a new pill option to the method mix, POPs offer a non-invasive option for postpartum women, particularly those breastfeeding, enabling them to space births as they choose.

Our study's preliminary results show that up to 86% of acceptors have completed 6 months of use. Offering additional contraceptive options to breastfeeding women is feasible and promises to expand method choice and quality of women's experience with the national FP program.