

Accelerated strategies for improving maternal health in Tamil Nadu with the collaboration of Pathfinder International

The Public Health System in Tamil Nadu is recognized at the national level for being the pioneer in implementing innovative programmes on maternal and child health. As one of the few states in India that has shown a rapidly declining maternal mortality over the years, Tamil Nadu is looked upon as a role model by other states for replication of its innovative approaches.

During the past four years, Government of Tamil Nadu introduced various schemes for the benefit of women and children which include Establishment of twenty four hours delivery care services in all the 1539 Primary Health Centres, 108 ambulance services in all the districts, establishment of Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care in Government Hospitals and medical college hospitals and Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care centres in Block PHCs, mobile medical outreach services in all blocks, upgradation of PHCs with 30 beds, operation theatres and posting of specialists, ultra sonogram facilities in almost all the PHCs, establishment of blood storage facilities in PHCs, gestational diabetes mellitus control programme, and trainings for all the doctors and nurses.

These programs have helped in significantly reducing pregnancy related deaths (maternal deaths). Since the countdown to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by 2015 has already started, the Health and Family Welfare Department focuses its attention to bring down the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in Tamil Nadu to less than 30 per 1,00,000 live births and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to less than 20 per 1000 live births.

While analyzing the causes of maternal deaths in Tamil Nadu, it is seen that Post Partum Haemorrhage (PPH – bleeding after the birth of the baby) is the major cause of maternal deaths. 22 percent of the maternal deaths are due to PPH and to a large extent these deaths are preventable.

The Government has earmarked adequate funds for maternal health services and developed accelerated strategies to reduce MMR due to PPH, which include active prevention and management of anaemia during pregnancy, Active Management of Third Stage of Labor (AMTSL) for all deliveries, Usage of Non- Pneumatic Anti-shock garment (NASG), when indicated, practice of PPH / shock drills routinely at all facilities on specific

dates throughout the state, universal usage of partographs for monitoring the progress of labour, establishment of Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH) skill laboratories in every district, intensifying community blood donation movement, streamlining case transfer networking along with maternity help line in 108 and formation of a state level technical committee for overseeing the implementation and project monitoring purposes.

Government and Pathfinder International, an international not-for-profit organization, with operations in over 25 countries, implemented care continuum model which included usage of Non Pneumatic Anti Shock Garments (NASG) in Tamil Nadu during the past two years which helped in saving several mothers due to PPH. Pathfinder International donated 55 garments and provided technical support for the pilot project, which has proven to be very successful.

A MoU has been signed on 19-1-11 between the Pathfinder International represented by country representative Dr.Remananda and the Principal Secretary to Government, Health and Family Welfare Department, Thiru.V.K.Subburaj. This will enable the health services to rapidly reduce the maternal deaths and improve the quality of maternity services.

Pathfinder is committed to donate 400 non-pneumatic anti-shock garments (NASGs) for a total value of Rupees 57.6 lakhs in the initial phase at no cost to the Government of Tamil Nadu. In addition, Pathfinder International, India will provide technical support to the Government of Tamil Nadu for a value of Rupees 20 lakhs for *Jan 2011 to March 2012*.

On signing of this MoU, the Department of Health and Family Welfare will take up the implementation of the care continuum model of Pathfinder International with the support of the State Health Society, Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project, Directorate of Medical Services and Directorate of Medical Education. This MoU will ensure the availability of worldwide technical knowledge and skills in preventing maternal deaths due to PPH and NASG usage for the needy women in time.

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