

Sure Start

Ensuring the health and safety of mothers and newborns in India through behavior change and community action

BACKGROUND

Sure Start was a seven-year initiative led by PATH to improve maternal and newborn health and save lives in India. Through partnerships with the government and nongovernmental organizations, the project implemented innovative, community-based solutions that contributed to substantial increases in antenatal and postnatal care, institutional deliveries, and recommended breastfeeding practices.

Sure Start focused on rural communities of Uttar Pradesh and settlements of marginalized people in Maharashtra's cities. Interventions empowered and encouraged community leaders and organizations, health workers, family members, and pregnant women to adopt best practices to improve health outcomes.

CHANGING BEHAVIORS TO STIMULATE ACTION

A key area of focus was changing behaviors to improve maternal and newborn health. Sure Start used creative methods to convey important information to a wide audience. Activities included:

- Using novel techniques in **interpersonal communication** to overcome barriers to behavior change.
- Mobilizing **community leaders**, increasing demand for health services, and enabling individual, household, and community action.
- Facilitating **access to skilled birth attendants** and encouraging institutional delivery.
- Strengthening **linkages** among communities, health care systems, and public and private service providers.



Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Sure Start worked with 95 partners to effect sustainable change in a target population of 24.5 million.

INCREASING ACCESS TO LIFESAVING SERVICES

Sure Start complemented the key strategies identified under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in Uttar Pradesh and the planned National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) in Maharashtra to increase access to services. Important results from Sure Start's work in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are outlined below.

Uttar Pradesh

- Mentored **7,450 accredited social health activists (ASHAs)** across seven districts to build capacity to conduct mothers' group meetings and home visits for expectant mothers.
- Revitalized **2,811 Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSCs)** across seven districts. VHSC members now hold meetings regularly and help with birth and death registrations, emergency transport, and improving the quality of health care.
- Trained **2,773 ASHAs** on how to conduct effective postnatal visits within one week after delivery.



An innovative communications campaign in Uttar Pradesh reached nearly 1 million people, including 37,677 pregnant women. The campaign used billboards, street plays, quizzes, and films to communicate about health of mothers and newborns.

- Established **6,871 mothers' groups** at village level and increased participation of pregnant women from 40 to 54 percent between 2008 and 2010.

Maharashtra

- Established **52 Monitoring of Maternal and Newborn Health Status (MOMS) Committees** in Pune.
- Facilitated adoption of **12,000 pregnant women** by **170 self-help groups**.
- Recruited **800 college volunteers** from the National Service Scheme to mobilize communities and disseminate key messages about maternal and newborn health.
- Obtained examinations for **26,823 pregnant women** through 131 clinics. Subsequently, 2,728 high-risk cases were referred to specialist clinics in 20 health posts, which also managed care for 732 newborns.
- In partnership with Malegaon Municipal Corporation, engaged **90 community members** to participate in meetings on quality of care in two health posts.
- Built the capacity of **176 link workers** and **205 health workers** to effectively counsel pregnant women and their families.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Sure Start contributed to gains in health indicators in both Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The tables below highlight changes in project areas over time.

Improvements in health indicators in project areas in Uttar Pradesh, 2007 to 2011

| Indicator | 2007 % | 2011 % |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Women registering pregnancy within 12 weeks | 78 | 90 |
| Pregnant women who received complete antenatal checkups | 13 | 25 |
| Institutional deliveries | 24 | 57 |
| Mothers breastfeeding baby within one hour of delivery | 53 | 69 |
| Exclusive breastfeeding in the first week after birth | 21 | 52 |
| Women seeking treatment from a trained provider for a postpartum danger sign | 15 | 26 |
| Mothers who received <i>Janani Suraksha Yojana</i> financial assistance | 28 | 82 |

Improvements in health indicators in project areas in Maharashtra, 2008 to 2011

| Indicator | 2008 % | 2011 % |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Women registering pregnancy within 12 weeks | 41 | 54 |
| Institutional deliveries | 78 | 88 |
| Awareness of <i>Janani Suraksha Yojana</i> | 9 | 47 |
| Women who sought treatment after knowledge of danger signs | 78 | 85 |
| Pregnant women who received complete antenatal checkups | 70 | 83 |
| Mothers breastfeeding baby within one hour of delivery | 43 | 58 |
| Mothers receiving postnatal checkup | 38 | 57 |

Photos: PATH/Lakshman Anand.



PATH is an international nonprofit organization that transforms global health through innovation. We take an entrepreneurial approach to developing and delivering high-impact, low-cost solutions, from lifesaving vaccines and devices to collaborative programs with communities. Through our work in more than 70 countries, PATH and our partners empower people to achieve their full potential.

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