



Case Study

Rural Ultrasound Program in Nepal

A success story in reducing maternal deaths in remote areas

Project: Improvement of Maternal and Child Care in Remote Areas (IMCCR)

April 2021

Situation

Nepal has very successfully reduced the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 539 to 239 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births between 1996 and 2016. However, more deaths can be prevented by avoiding the “the three delays”, that is time to decide to seek help, time to reach a facility and time to receive adequate care.

Approach

To identify complicated pregnancies early in rural areas of Nepal, where services of radiologists are typically unavailable, a Rural Ultrasound Program was initiated under the “IMCCR” project (“Improvement of Maternal and Child Care in Remote Areas”). The project has been co-designed by the German Development Cooperation and Nepalese Ministry of Health and Population, and is being implemented



through KfW Development Bank. Eight nurses working at different Health Posts were trained for 21 days at Bheri Hospital in 2019 and equipped with a digital, semi portable ultrasound device – and then started scanning pregnant women at their Health Posts and communities. The Far-Western Provincial Health Directorate decided to roll out this successful approach into the entire the province. Now, all municipalities of FW Province have at least one Health Facility with available ultrasound services for the examination of pregnant women.

Results

Roughly a year into the Rural Ultrasound Program, the FW Provincial Health Directorate organized a Review Workshop in Dhangadhi from April 3 to 6, 2021. Nurses from all 88 municipalities, trainers,

Background information

m4h has contributed to the development of Nepal’s health sector since 2015, implementing a total of 8 contributions to diverse projects from health infrastructure over family planning to maternal and new-born health.

senior officials from the Ministry of Health and Population, the Province Authorities and Development Partners including m4h/MEH as the IMCCR Implementation Consultant participated in the workshop. The reports from all Health Facilities showed that out of total estimated 75,237 pregnant women, 45,135 (69.9%) received ultrasound services. Out of those 1,562 were identified as complicated and referred, despite the difficult circumstances due to on-going COVID pandemic.

Catching the Government’s attention and support

Acknowledging the contribution of nurses in reducing maternal deaths by timely identifying complicated pregnancies, the Chief Minister committed that the Provincial Government will allocate adequate funds to the Province Health Directorate for basic training of another 88 nurses, refresher trainings for those already trained and for a second Provincial Review Workshop in the upcoming fiscal year. The IMCCR Project will conduct another full basic training course for the facilities implementing this project to ease the pressure on the nurses currently on this paramount task.



We are proud that within a year this rather small initiative was taken up by Government and ongoing contributions are being made to further reduce Maternal Mortality in Nepal.

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