

Falling off the radar:  
Continuum of care and referral  
systems for maternal health in India



### Over view of presentation

- Continuum of care
- Referral for Complications
- Experiences of women
- Recommendations in the light of the UN-SR (Paul Hunt) report

### Continuum of care: just post-partum?

In this presentation – Continuum of care is taken to mean the seamless process of -linkages from pregnancy registration to care for any complications to developing a birth-plan

Safe delivery with referral linkages; followed by post-partum observation, home visits/ check-up and treatment for any post-partum complications.

Newborn care and survival may be added.

### First point of contact: ANC

- Approx. 250 lakh women give birth each year in India.
- DLHS - 3 estimates 75% receive some form of ante-natal care = 190 lakh approx.

Is the system able to track the women who were registered?

Is anyone checking whether they go safely through pregnancy and childbirth/abortion?

Note that 25% pregnant women, about 50-60 lakh, had NO contact with any health system

190 lakh pregnant women met one health provider

- According to DLHS 3, during childbirth, 47% women had Institutional births =120 lakh approx. (This tallies with GOI data of 92 lakh women who received JSY in 2009-2010).

So ....despite **reaching some health provider during pregnancy, around 70 lakh women across India do NOT reach an institution for childbirth...** they deliver at home or en route

Is anyone checking whether they go safely through pregnancy and childbirth/abortion?

## Falling off the radar

- Approx. **120 lakh pregnant women are outside institutional care** during childbirth.

Significant numbers of these women may have met with a provider during pregnancy

Is anyone checking whether they are healthy and safe after childbirth?

According to DLHS-3, 39% of women undergoing Home Delivery face health problems or complications after the birth

Does anyone know what happens to them afterwards?

## After childbirth

- DLHS 3 says that 35% of all women suffer from complications after delivery including high fever and heavy bleeding
- Among the 250 lakh women who give birth, only around 48% receive a check-up within 48 hours, approx. 120 lakh.
- The remaining half, **120 lakh women, remain unattended in the crucial time period immediately after delivery**

Is anyone checking whether they are healthy and safe after childbirth?

## Referral for complications

- It is estimated that about 15% of pregnant women develop complications. Therefore in India around 35-40 lakh women a year will develop complications at any time in pregnancy, during childbirth, after delivery or after abortion
- Around 59% women reported **pregnancy complications** (DLHS-3)
- Around 60% of all women reported a complication **during childbirth**, whether they delivered at home or in an institution
- 31% women who delivered in a government institution developed complications **after birth**

## Where will these women go?



## Two stories from UP

When M. (Schedule Caste), 26, a resident of **Mirzapur, UP** was pregnant for the third time, she neither had any antenatal checkups nor had any immunization, but she was completely healthy.

On 12th September 2008 at about 8:00pm, she started having labor pains. Her mother took her to a CHC which was 2kms away on a small cart, by then it was already 09:00pm.

The ANM was present at the CHC and so she admitted M. The whole night, the ANM tried to deliver the child (she pressed M's abdomen many times), but nothing happened.

- Next day 13 Sept, the ANM asked the family to take M to the district hospital.
- But the family didn't have the means and the money, so they took her back home with continued labour pains.
- Next day 14 Sept, at around 09:00am, they took her to a private hospital on a tractor, but the doctor refused to admit her. They pleaded in front of the doctor, and after some time he admitted her.
- She delivered a dead baby girl, and then they brought her back home.

- After 5 days, on 19 September 2008, she developed swelling and pain in her abdomen and legs, then her family took her about 40kms away to a government hospital which was closed at around 10:00pm.
  - From there they took her to a private hospital where the doctor gave medicines worth Rs.250 but didn't admit her.
  - So, they again took her to the government hospital, but since no one would open the gate, they waited outside the gate all night
  - 20 Sept. she was admitted at around 8:00am and the doctor started a drip, but she died within few hours.
- The family hired a tempo for Rs.700 to bring the body back home.

- N a 35-year old resident of **Muzaffarnagar** district was pregnant for the fifth time, but she didn't get any ANC, but she was completely healthy. She had completed 9 months of her pregnancy and on 26<sup>th</sup> April 09, she complained of pain and amniotic fluid coming out, so she went with her neighbor to the PHC.
- But, the doctor sent her back home telling her that she is fine, and still there is time for her delivery.
- On 03<sup>rd</sup> May 09, at about 08:00am, when her pains were stronger, her husband took her, the ASHA and a woman from the neighbor to the PHC. The nurse was present at the PHC, and she admitted N, but said both the mother and the child were in danger. She asked the husband to get the injection to increase the pain.

- At about 10:00am, a baby boy was born, who died within 5 minutes of birth.
- N's condition was deteriorating due to heavy bleeding and at about 07:00pm the doctor asked them to take her to district hospital.
- Her husband didn't have the money, but he had to hire a private vehicle to take her to the CHC and by the time they reached the CHC, she was already dead.
- The doctor at the CHC asked them to take her body away, because if there would be any enquiry, they will have to exhume the body in her grave for the post mortem.

#### What does the JSY scheme say about referral?

- As per the JSY scheme, ASHA has to bring women in labour to the institution for birth
- The JSY does not clearly say what happens if the woman develops a complication:
- Does the ASHA take her? If yes, where?
  - Does the doctor or nurse take her? How?
  - Is the woman's family just expected to take her away? Where are they to go? How? Who will pay for the treatment of complications?

#### Do we have the facilities in place?

##### DLHS- 3 Facility data

- Half the PHCs in India have not handled even 10 deliveries in the last month
- Half the CHCs have been made into FRU but less than 20% of these can provide C-section and less than 10% have blood storage

*"DLHS 3 data shows improvements but there are miles to go before the public system is fully geared to deliver quality health services for all"* (GOI, 5 Years of NRHM).

### Recommendations

- In order to prevent maternal deaths and morbidities, the JSY focus has to expand from institutional care to continuum of care:
- There needs to be 100% ANC registration, and 100% post-partum care coverage
- Contact with any provider during pregnancy should lead to a Tracking System by which all complications and treatment are recorded along with outcomes
- The health system should take responsibility for treatment during complications and all referrals
- All treatment for complications must be free

Thank you!

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