



## INTRAEALTH IN INDIA

### Reaching the Most Vulnerable



India is a country diverse in geography, people and cultural traditions. With a vibrant economy, India enjoys many features of growth and development. Not all Indians benefit from their country's economic boom, however, and a wide gap between rich and poor shows in the health of the population and access to health care.

India's health care challenges include a high rate of maternal and child death—every five minutes an Indian woman dies in childbirth. India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, and the neighboring state of Jharkhand have some of the highest maternal and child death rates in the world.

#### **Taking Knowledge to Practice**

Through USAID's Vistaar Project, IntraHealth and partners are assisting the government of India and state governments of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand to improve the health of pregnant women, newborns and young children by taking knowledge about health to practice. This effort covers 22 districts of Uttar Pradesh and all of Jharkhand. These states are home to approximately 10 million pregnant women and 14 million children under the age of five.

The Vistaar Project is working to promote the sharing and implementation of strategies and approaches known to improve health among the women and children who are poorest and have the least access to health care. Areas of focus include preventing and treating anemia, complementary feeding (the transition from exclusive breastfeeding to family foods), newborn care and the delay of marriage and first birth.

The project began by facilitating reviews of the available evidence on which approaches are best suited for improving health in these focus areas. Based on recommendations from the expert reviews, the project will provide technical assistance in large-scale implementation of health programs in the two states. Where critical knowledge is lacking about the best approaches, Vistaar will conduct small-scale "action research" projects. Vistaar seeks to generate and share knowledge, facilitate collaboration and convergence and promote approaches with a strong focus on equity, including gender equity.

As part of its role in fostering collaboration and advocacy, the project supported a National Nutrition Conclave, held in Chennai, India, in August 2007. The meeting focused on the question: A nutrition-secure India—how do we get there? Recommendations from the conclave are being carried forward through a high-level national coalition.

#### **Decreasing the Prevalence of STIs and HIV/AIDS**

To travel from one group of people to another, a transmittable disease requires a bridge of human carriers. In the case of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in India, one of the highest risk groups is commercial sex workers, and the bridge from that group to the healthy population consists of their male

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*The Avahan Project is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and led by Population Services International.*

*For more information on the PRIME II Project visit [www.prime2.org](http://www.prime2.org)*

clients. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Avahan Project focuses on preventing and treating STIs among those male clients and thereby cutting off passage to the healthy population.

Through the Avahan Project, IntraHealth worked with Population Services International to reduce STIs among males at high risk in the southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. STIs are a significant co-factor in HIV transmission. To promote treatment-seeking for STIs and adoption of safer sexual practices, the project recruited more than 800 qualified, allopathic doctors who were already seeing STI patients and franchised their provider-owned facilities as Key Clinics.

IntraHealth aided the project in improving the performance and skill level of these private providers in the areas of STI management, diagnosis, knowledge and treatment. IntraHealth developed a quality of care matrix that includes a checklist, a set of indicators and other steps to support physicians in providing high quality care. IntraHealth also offered additional clinical training for physicians to ensure the doctors were able to properly diagnose STIs.

The project demonstrated that private providers who work independently can be systematically supported to be more effective in promoting health at the community level. Overall, the providers demonstrated improvement in 14 of 19 quality indicators, including those that can reduce STI and HIV rates of transmission.

### **Improving Family Planning and Reproductive Health**

IntraHealth's current projects in India build on a foundation of earlier successful programs that improved primary-level family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) services in Uttar Pradesh. This work, funded by USAID via the PRIME II Project, included:

- Training more than 10,500 auxiliary nurse-midwives and their supervisors to improve family planning services, especially IUD insertions and removals
- Training community midwives, a new cadre of private-sector providers intended to supplement the work of public-sector providers and increase access to safe delivery, family planning and other reproductive and child health services
- Training Indigenous Systems of Medicine practitioners (ISMPs)—providers who practice a blend of traditional and modern medicine—to counsel clients for family planning, distribute condoms and pills, and refer clients needing clinical FP services
- Developing a community-based program to help pregnant women and their family caregivers understand the birth process and recognize and manage life-threatening complications.

*IntraHealth International mobilizes local talent to create sustainable and accessible health care in developing countries. A not-for-profit organization, IntraHealth has worked in more than 50 countries over the last three decades.*

*Photos: Margaret Rabb | Photos should not be construed as indicating the health status of persons depicted.*