

Safer Pregnancy in Tamil Nadu: from Vision to Reality



World Health
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Regional Office for South-East Asia

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Contents

Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Executive Summary	vii
1. Profile of Tamil Nadu	1
2. Enabling Environment	6
3. Progress and Challenges: Health Policy and Programmes in Tamil Nadu	14
4. Rhetoric to Reality: Reducing the MMR	17
5. Systems Strengthening	38
6. Community Sensitization on Gender-related Health Issues	47
7. For the Future	50
Additional Information	52–77
1. Referral Transport	52
2. Logistics and the Supply Chain	57
3. Voluntary Blood Donation for Blood Banking	62
4. Continuous Monitoring and Periodic Evaluation	64
5. Urban Health	70
6. Operationalization of First Referral Units and use of GIS Mapping	75
Annexures	78–83
1. Case Studies	78
2. Organogram	83
Abbreviations & Acronyms	84

Foreword



About six years remain before the target date of 2015 for achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. While there has been steady and consistent progress towards most of the targets, progress in improving maternal health lags behind perceptibly. Due to an intricate correlation between maternal and neonatal health, maternal health has implications for the achievement of the MDG 4 target of reducing under-five child mortality, in which neonatal mortality is a critical component.

Due to sociocultural and economic differences, the situation of maternal and neonatal health varies considerably between countries of the South-East Asia Region, as well as within each country. India, the country with the largest population in the Region (over one billion inhabitants) has the highest number of maternal and newborn deaths in the world. It alone contributes over 68% of maternal and 76% of neonatal deaths in the Region. However, there are enormous variations within the country, with some states demonstrating tremendous progress in improving maternal and neonatal health.

The state of Tamil Nadu in South India is an example of such a success story, reflecting how the power of political will, the right blend of effective women-centred interventions tailored to the local sociocultural environment, and a well-established continuum of care based on the strong edifice of efficient health systems can bring about conspicuous improvement in maternal and neonatal health, as well as in the overall well-being of the population. In this monograph the officials of the Health and Family Welfare Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu generously share their experiences, achievements and lessons learnt from their efforts to ensure safer pregnancy and better newborn survival through the successful implementation of the Family Welfare Programme.

This monograph was prepared by the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, WHO Country Office, India and the Department of Making Pregnancy Safer of WHO Headquarters in collaboration with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu and Government of India. It is intended for a wide range of health authorities and programme managers to learn and adapt successful programme strategies in their settings to accelerate action to improve maternal and neonatal health.

Samlee Plianbangchang

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Regional Director

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