



UNFPA RECOGNIZES INDIA'S COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING MATERNAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING" - SCHEMES

NEWS: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is implementing a number of programmes to improve maternal health outcomes toward achieving zero preventable maternal deaths. These include assured quality and respectful maternity care under the Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan Yojana (SUMAN), Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) and the Midwifery Services Initiative.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Key facts:

- 1. Global Standing:** India is one of the most significant contributors to global maternal mortality, highlighting the urgent need for improved healthcare strategies.
- 2. Progress in Numbers:** The Maternal Mortality Ratio has decreased significantly from 374 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18 to around 97 per 100,000 live births in recent years, showcasing substantial improvements.
- 3. Disparities in Access:** There are significant regional disparities in maternal health outcomes, with rural areas often facing higher MMR due to a lack of access to quality healthcare facilities.
- 4. Government Spending:** The Indian government has increased its budget for health services, particularly maternal health, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive care during pregnancy and childbirth.
- 5. Focus on Adolescents:** Initiatives aimed at educating adolescents about reproductive health and family planning are being emphasized to reduce early pregnancies and improve maternal health outcomes.
- 6. Partnerships:** Collaboration with NGOs and international organizations, including UNFPA, has been instrumental in implementing maternal health programs and improving family planning services.
- 7. Innovative Solutions:** The use of technology, such as mobile health applications and telemedicine, has been introduced to reach remote populations and provide timely healthcare information and services.
- 8. Awareness and Education:** Community-based programs have been launched to educate families about the importance of maternal health, leading to increased utilization of healthcare services.





Government Initiatives:

- 1. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):** A cash incentive program encouraging institutional deliveries among pregnant women, particularly in rural areas, to reduce MMR.
- 2. National Family Planning Program:** Aimed at providing a range of contraceptive choices, ensuring informed and voluntary decisions for family planning among couples.
- 3. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** A maternity benefits program providing financial assistance to pregnant women to ensure proper nutrition and healthcare during pregnancy.
- 4. Maternal Health Program:** An initiative focusing on antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and postnatal care to enhance overall maternal health outcomes.
- 5. ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) Program:** Mobilizes community health workers to promote maternal health services, educate families, and facilitate access to healthcare facilities.
- 6. Swasthya Sathi Scheme:** A health insurance program that aims to provide coverage for maternal health services, reducing the financial burden on families.
- 7. Digital Health Initiatives:** Integration of technology in maternal health services, including the use of mobile apps and telemedicine to provide education and consultations for expectant mothers.
- 8. State-specific Initiatives:** Various states have launched tailored programs addressing local maternal health challenges, demonstrating a decentralized approach to healthcare delivery.

Article 47 of the Indian Constitution:

- 1. Directive Principles of State Policy:** Article 47 emphasizes the state's responsibility to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living and to improve public health, particularly among vulnerable populations.
- 2. Focus on Maternal and Child Health:** This article mandates the government to prioritize maternal and child health as part of its broader health initiatives, reflecting the importance of these issues in national policy.

Measures to Implement Article 47:

- 1. Integrated Healthcare Services:** Establishing comprehensive healthcare systems that provide maternal and child health services as part of general healthcare to ensure accessibility and continuity of care.
- 2. Public Health Campaigns:** Launching nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about maternal health, nutrition, and the importance of antenatal and postnatal care, targeting both urban and rural populations.
- 3. Strengthening Infrastructure:** Investing in healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to provide essential services like maternal health clinics and birthing centres.
- 4. Capacity Building for Healthcare Providers:** Continuous training and skill development for healthcare workers to ensure high-quality maternal care and adherence to best practices.
- 5. Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:** Establishing robust systems to monitor maternal health indicators, evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs, and identify areas for improvement.



Reasons for Persistently Higher MMR:

- 1. Lack of Skilled Birth Attendants:** Many births occur at home without the presence of skilled healthcare professionals, increasing the risk of complications during delivery.
- 2. Delay in Seeking Care:** Women may delay seeking medical help due to a lack of awareness, fear, or stigma associated with maternal health issues, leading to worsening conditions.
- 3. Limited Access to Emergency Services:** Insufficient availability of emergency obstetric care in rural areas hampers timely intervention for complications such as haemorrhage or eclampsia.
- 4. Transportation Challenges:** Poor transportation infrastructure can delay access to healthcare facilities, particularly in emergencies, resulting in adverse maternal health outcomes.
- 5. Health System Inequities:** Disparities in healthcare access based on caste, gender, and economic status can prevent marginalized groups from receiving adequate maternal care.
- 6. Inadequate Postnatal Care:** Limited focus on postnatal care leaves many women without essential follow-up services after childbirth, which is crucial for identifying and managing complications.
- 7. Infectious Diseases:** A high prevalence of communicable diseases (e.g., malaria, tuberculosis) can complicate pregnancies and increase the risk of maternal mortality.
- 8. Family Planning:** High rates of unintended pregnancies due to inadequate access to contraceptive services can lead to higher maternal health risks, especially among young and undernourished women.

Way Forward:

- 1. Enhancing Training and Education:** Implement ongoing training programs for healthcare providers to ensure they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills in maternal and child health care.
- 2. Telemedicine and Digital Health Solutions:** Expand the use of telemedicine and mobile health applications to provide remote consultations and health education, particularly in rural areas with limited access to healthcare.
- 3. Improving Data Collection and Monitoring:** Establish robust data systems for monitoring maternal health indicators, enabling evidence-based decision-making and targeted interventions.
- 4. Nutrition Support Programs:** Implement comprehensive nutrition programs for pregnant and postpartum women to address malnutrition and improve health outcomes.
- 5. Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to educate the public about maternal health, family planning, and the importance of institutional deliveries, thereby encouraging positive behaviour changes.
- 6. Involvement of Private Sector:** Engage private healthcare providers in maternal health initiatives to enhance service delivery and expand access to quality care.
- 7. Financial Incentives and Insurance Schemes:** Expand health insurance coverage and financial incentives for families to encourage them to seek institutional care during childbirth.
- 8. Focus on Mental Health:** Integrate mental health services into maternal care to address issues such as postpartum depression and anxiety, ensuring holistic support for mothers.

Source: <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/unfpa-recognises-indias-extraordinary-progress-in-advancing-maternal-health-and-family-planning/>