



Project Summary

Integrated Family Health Initiative: Catalyzing Change in Bihar, India

Background

Bihar, India's third most populous state, has seen significant improvements in the health and well-being of its population in recent years. Yet despite the advances made, Bihar remains one of India's largest and poorest states, and is affected by numerous challenges in the areas of maternal, newborn and child health. The state has some of the country's highest rates of maternal, neonatal and infant mortality, as well as high prevalence of malnutrition, anemia, stunted growth and high fertility rates. Extreme poverty, gender and social inequality, low literacy rates and early marriage further compound Bihar's reproductive health crisis. With 89% of the population living in rural communities, nearly one-third of households do not have access to any government health care services. Where services are available, they are inferior in quality – a consequence of inadequate public health infrastructure, lack of accurate data and outdated reporting systems, limited skills and low motivation among frontline health workers,

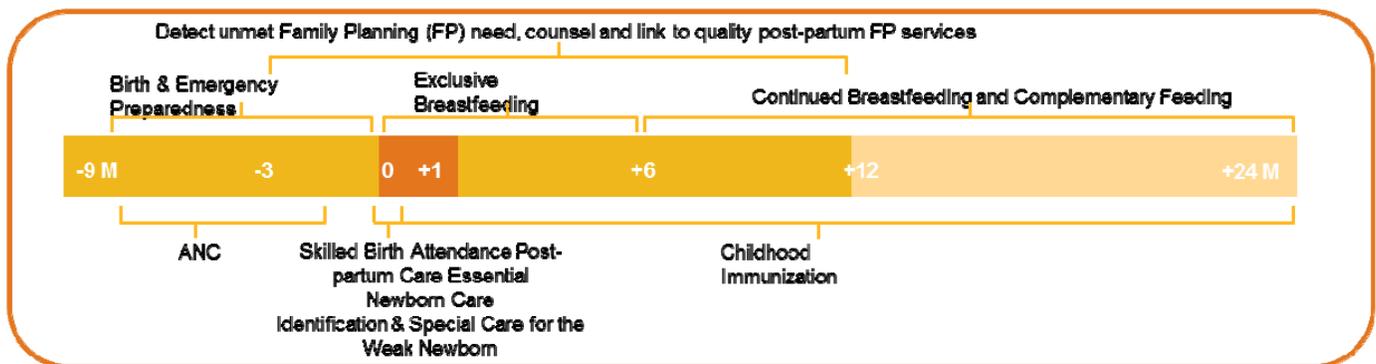
weak training systems, inadequate tools and job aids, and an absence of planning, supervision and monitoring.

Recognizing these persistent gaps, CARE India launched the Integrated Family Health Initiative (IFHI) project in 2010, as the lead for the broader Ananya consortium, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. IFHI's objective is to support the Government of Bihar in increasing the universal coverage and quality of life-saving interventions and improve the health and survival of women, newborns and children during the first 1,000 days - from conception to the child's second birthday.

The Project

To do this, IFHI implemented a set of core, proven interventions, spanning the family health continuum of services (Figure 1): maternal, newborn, nutrition, immunization and family planning. The interventions were initially implemented in 137 blocks of eight high-risk districts and scaled-up to the remaining 30 districts after two years.

Figure 1: Continuum of Family Health Services



Core Interventions

The core interventions address critical barriers to the delivery of services by:

- Improving counseling and emergency preparedness for mothers and newborns;
- Strengthening the quality management of routine deliveries and post-partum evaluations;
- Building basic and comprehensive emergency and obstetric care capabilities in health facilities;
- Refining routine management of neonatal infections;
- Ensuring full immunization;
- Improving nutrition through iron and folic acid uptake during pregnancy, early and exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding; and
- Expanding access to quality family planning services and birth spacing methods.

Cross-cutting interventions include:

- Strengthening data driven management;
- Supporting self-driven monitoring and quality improvement processes in facilities;
- Integrating service delivery by activating coordination meetings for all frontline health workers;
- Improving the tools for and skills of frontline and facility health workers through mentoring and training; and
- Creating partnerships with the private sector.

Several of IFHI's core solutions were accepted by the Government of Bihar for scale-up across the state, including: the health sub-center platform meetings for frontline health workers, mobile nurse mentoring and training, mini skill labs and self-driven quality improvement in facilities.

Innovations

In addition to the core set of interventions, CARE pilot tested several innovations, new to Bihar, to address underlying barriers to the delivery of quality services. Two key innovations won approval for scale-up across Bihar by the Cabinet in September 2013:

1. **Team Based Goals and Incentives:** an intervention aimed at strengthening the teamwork and motivation of the front line health workers through the setting of collective targets and recognition of successful teams on a quarterly basis with a small non-financial reward. The intervention has demonstrated increased teamwork and coordination amongst frontline workers, and has resulted in higher quality home visits.
2. **Information Communication Technology based**

Continuum of Care Services: an award winning (mHealth Alliance Collaboration Award 2013) mobile technology intervention to aid frontline health workers in registering, tracking, managing care, and counseling pregnant women and mothers with newborns.

Indicators of Success

IFHI interventions have shown significant success in the original eight districts since implementation began* across several key indicators:

- At least two home visits during the last trimester increased from 29% to 62%;
- Three visits in the first week following delivery increased from 6% to 29%;
- Counseling on maternal danger signs increased by 29%;
- Advice on family planning during pregnancy by frontline health workers increased by almost 24%;
- Use of modern contraceptives (6-8 months postpartum) increased from 11% to 17%;
- Early initiation of breastfeeding increased by 20%;
- Complementary feeding, including children 6-11 months receiving age appropriate frequency of semi-solid food increased from 30% to 77%;
- Percentage of children (6-11 months) who received DPT -3 vaccine increased from 60% to 70%;
- Use of basic infection control practices has improved: correct hand washing increased by 9% and use of gloves when conducting deliveries is at 91%.

*December 2011 to December 2013

The Way Forward

In view of the successes of the IFHI initiative, CARE has been identified as the lead partner in the formation of a State Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Unit for the state of Bihar under the Government of India's RMNCH+A program. A Technical Support Unit was formed in 2013 to support both the Health and Social Welfare Departments of the Government of Bihar to achieve rapid and sustainable reduction in rates of mortality, fertility and malnutrition, and increase immunization coverage. Under this partnership CARE aims to provide catalytic support to the two departments to transform capabilities and behaviors, by building leadership and ownership as well as strengthening systems, reporting and budgeting, establishing a social accountability process, and importantly expanding the use of proven solutions and tools.

Visit for more information: <http://familyplanning.care2share.wikispaces.net/Integrated+Family+Health+Initiative>