



MANASHI – improving the health of mothers and infants

in Kapilvastu, Nepal

The MANASHI project in the Kapilvastu district of Nepal is a self-help based health project aimed at improving the health of mothers and infants. FAIRMED supports the local people in the development of health-promoting measures, facilitates access to quality health services, and strengthens the local healthcare system through the construction and equipping of birthing centres.

Background

Kapilvastu district is located in the Terai plains of southern Nepal, alongside the border with India. The district is one of the poorest and most neglected regions in Nepal. The majority of the population lives in deep poverty and without access to education, adequate health services or safe drinking water. The people of Kapilvastu live predominantly from subsistence agriculture. The high level of labour migration to India by the men of the region has had social consequences for those left behind, creating a state of dependence and stifling the country's economic development.

Various socio-cultural practices serve to negatively impact the health situation of pregnant women (229 deaths per 100,000 births) and the survival rate of newborns (36 deaths per 1000 births). Around 55% of the women in Kapilvastu are illiterate, while 40% of children are chronically undernourished and 78% of births take place at home without medical assistance. Pregnant women and their families rarely attend any form of birth preparation and are consequently unaware of the importance of professional antenatal care in clinics or of giving birth in a suitable medical institution.

The project

The aim of the project is to work in cooperation with affected groups in order to provide sustainable access to health services and further strengthen the existing healthcare system. Safeguarding the health of pregnant women and infants is at the heart of the project.

Aided by Female Community Health Volunteers and mothers groups, the project is reaching out to women in the project area, with the aim of raising awareness of good health practices such as family planning and basic hygiene measures. Throughout, FAIRMED works in close cooperation with the district health authorities and the project partner, International Nepal Fellowship (INF). Working together, the various parties carry out a range of maternity and neonatal training courses for obstetricians, establish maternity clinics and provide health facilities with the medical equipment they need to carry out births. Training for the local health workers in the project area facilitates the provision of better quality pregnancy and postnatal checks, and thereby helps prevent related health complications and reduce maternal and infant mortality.

Objectives and activities

By increasing the quality of health services in the project area, access to higher quality health services is improved for pregnant women, mothers and infants.

Strong local health system with higher quality health services

- Training for health professionals and volunteer health workers
- Investment in the development and expansion of infrastructures for maternity clinics.

Participation by the population in shaping health policy

- Reinforcement of operational and management committees in the health centres through training and further education.
- Empowerment of volunteer health workers and their networks to inform (pregnant) women about the need for antenatal care, of the importance of childbirth in professional surroundings, and of their rights (during pregnancy: e.g. that they are entitled to free health services).

Reduction of infant mortality and promotion of health-aware behaviour among women

- Mapping of behaviour patterns in pregnancy and the development of communication strategies for behavioural change in pregnancy and childbirth.
- Establishment of mothers groups to raise awareness among pregnant women of risks and dangers, and of good childcare; towards greater maternal responsibility overall during pregnancy.

Beneficiaries

The population of Kapilvastu stands at around 650,000 inhabitants, who are spread across the 77 villages that make up the district. A total of 603 mother groups, with over 15,000 members and spanning 44 villages, benefit directly from the project. Around 7,600 pregnant women and 6,000 newborn babies benefit from high-quality pregnancy and aftercare examinations. Alongside members of the mothers groups, around 130,000 women of reproductive age in the region are being made aware of the risks and dangers of pregnancy and of good child care. This is pursued through alternative channels such as posters and radio campaigns. In addition, all of the people in Kapilvastu district benefit indirectly from improved facilities at the health and maternity centres, as well as improvements in health services through better-trained staff.

Monitoring

The FAIRMED project team at the coordination office in Taulihawa ensures the implementation of activities and undertakes a quarterly report as well as a progress report every six months, including financial statement. The project is also accompanied by regular monitoring visits by employees of the FAIRMED country office in Kathmandu and by local official agencies and government bodies. Thanks to consistent monitoring and the engagement of the affected communities, problems at all levels can be identified in a timely manner, causes can be analysed and methods and objectives can be adapted where required. The overarching aim is to reduce maternal mortality and child mortality. The following instruments are used to measure the progress of the project:

- **'Self-Applied Technique for Quality Health'** (SATH) is a mapping technique that is used to appraise the health of pregnant women and mothers. Each mothers group provides a hand-drawn map of their village that shows every house with a pregnant woman. At each meeting, the card is updated to show the number of attended check-ups for each woman. This is hoped to raise attendance of prenatal checks from 54% to 80%.
- **The 'Community Health Score Board'** (CHSB) is a health policy evaluation tool that enables the population to assess the accessibility, use and quality of health services. Progress and improvements are measured by the percentage of prenatal examinations, the number of active health workers and mothers groups, the malnutrition rate of children, and the number of births that take place in a healthcare facility. The rate of accompanied births in health care facilities is set to be raised from 9% to 40%, and postnatal examinations from 42% to 60%.

Facts & Figures

Project duration:	2015 – 2018
Population:	28.5 million
Development according to HDI*:	144 Place (of 188)
Gross domestic product/capita:	\$ 2 300 (CH: \$ 55 100)
People living below the absolute poverty threshold:	15%.

Source: 2016 UNDP Human Development Report
*Human Development Index



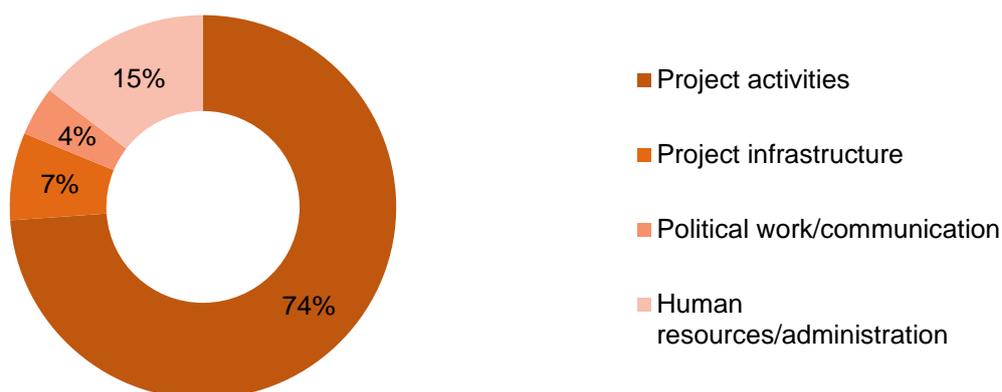
Sustainability

In a climate of mutual learning and respect, FAIRMED pursues its activities alongside local official agencies, government bodies and partner organisations, and works exclusively with local staff. This helps foster broad acceptance that, in turn, enables official agencies to assume responsibility for the continuation of activities once the project is completed. Throughout, the approach of community-based management, which incorporates the respective communities in the administration of the health system, is central to ensuring the sustainability of all FAIRMED projects. This helps establish individual responsibility, ensures the consideration of the interests of communities during implementation, and promotes sustainable development. This project is working towards sustainability through the following measures:

- ‘Health Facility Operation and Management Committees’ (HFOMCs) are government-implemented steering committees for the strategic management of health facilities. These are responsible for the management and operation of health centres, and ensure that healthcare providers are meeting the interests of the population. The committees comprise representatives of health centres, members of the public (e.g. voluntary health workers, teachers, social workers) and official agencies.
- Education and training for local health professionals to safeguard independent and local expertise. The educational programme includes the use of monitoring tools (see Scoreboard and SATH), capabilities for the identification of existing harmful behaviours, communication skills, documentation and reporting skills, assistance in the development of high-quality project materials, and financial management.
- Training for voluntary health workers in technical implementation and mobilisation. This knowledge will ultimately be passed on to the mothers groups.
- In line with government requirements, monthly mother’s group meetings serve to raise awareness of the importance of mother-child health and of giving birth in health centres.

Budget

The total Budget is 961,256 francs for the project period from 2015 to 2018.



Project activities: directly assists the beneficiaries, including the workers that carry out the project activities

Project infrastructure: long-term investments that directly benefit those in need

Political work / communication: PR and advocacy work

Human resources / administration: administration, incl. employees not directly involved in project activities

Sakuntala's Story

Birthing at home in Kapilvastu

The traditions of Sakuntala's family meant that she was forbidden from giving birth in the health center. However, when the time finally came and Sakuntala experienced the first contractions, there were complications. Eventually, a project health worker succeeded in convincing Sakuntala's family to allow her to give birth in the hospital. Upon arrival, the young woman was so weak that she lost consciousness multiple times. With the help of oxygen, Sakuntala regained her energy and twenty minutes later the miracle happened: Sakuntala's daughter, Sunita, saw the light of day.

«FAIRMED saved my daughter's life, and that is a tremendous gift. And I am happy that the organisation is saving the lives of many other mothers and children».



Our heartfelt thanks for your interest in our work. Since 1959, the Swiss development organisation FAIRMED has been committed to improving the health of people affected by poverty in Africa and Asia. Thanks to the support of our loyal donors, donations from foundations, as well as inheritances and bequests, FAIRMED is able to offer the very poorest a path to basic healthcare.

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