

Reaching Reproductive Health for the Indigenous people in Bangladesh:1204

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Background: UNDP initiated a Pilot Initiative in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to improve the Reproductive Health of the hard-to-reach people in the region which is a post-conflict hard to reach area with more than two thirds of people lacking basic health care. One of the most disadvantaged and isolated areas in Bangladesh, with hilly and remote terrain, a lack of communication, infrastructure, ethnic diversity, settlement patterns and a history of internal conflict. The CHT covers 5,089 square miles and has a population of about 1.3 million people with about two thirds of the population lacking access to basic health care services. Hospitals were mostly ill-functional due to lack of staffs, high chronic absenteeism of staffs, lack of trained staffs, lack of electricity, water supply, and difficult communication. Ethnicity was a barrier to access services especially RH services for women.

Objectives: The overall objective of the Initiative was to improve the health and nutrition status of the people in the CHT including RH services to the most hard to reach people. The Initiative fits within GoB priorities and policies, including Bangladesh's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Health, Nutrition and, Population Sector Programme (HNPSP) and, the Tribal Health, Nutrition and, Population Plan (THNPP).

Methodology: UNDP initiated Mobile Teams, community based Health Workers, provide technical assistance, build partnerships and capacity building of the Government and other stakeholders. The Initiative built its approach from the bottom up, by supporting the development of a network of female village-based health workers who were recruited from the community in consultation with local community leaders, trained for 3 months and provided with essential kits and logistics. Community Supervisors monitored the activities of the health workers and reported to the Mobile Team Leader. Outreach satellite clinics by mobile health teams operated 5 days on a rotational basis equipped with a mobile laboratory, pharmacy and lead by a Medical Doctor with support from a Nurse cum Midwife, a Pharmacist, a Lab Technician and a Health Promoter. Joint collaboration programmes were organized with the Government, NGOs, UN and private organizations. UNDP supported the Government with vehicle support, medicines and other Family Planning logistics. Joint collaboration programs were established with other UN agencies to provide umbrella service in a one stops service point. Government hospitals were provided with modern equipments and logistics. Workshops were organized to build capacity of local staffs and emergency referrals were provided through transport support to the government.

Results: The project helped to improve the health status of the people after one year compared with the baseline data collected before operationalizing the initiative. Maternal deaths and child deaths recorded was lowest in a year compared to the averages of last 10 years. 43% of delivery was attended by skilled attendants compared to only 13% previous year. Emergency referrals were provided to 95 cases to District Hospitals. 5350 cases of ARI and Diarrhoea were treated by the Health Team. 98% Children received Vitamin A and anti-Helminthics in the mobile clinics. The CPR increased to 85% comparing to 54% achieved last year. 3780 cases of fatal malaria were treated reducing significantly malarial deaths. 1250 cases of undiagnosed and untreated STI received modern treatment, FP logistics were available in all health centers and posts which were always short earlier due to difficulty in transportation.

Conclusions and Lessons Learnt: Capacity building of Governments and NGO's are important to achieve desired results. Providing logistics support to Government Health staffs helped to increase program effectiveness. Health Structures of a partner organization was utilized by another organization thus pooling of resources and maximizing utilization of resources and services. In a remote area it is essential that all the actors work as a team to gain highest success.