



PROJECT FACT SHEET

SUMMARY

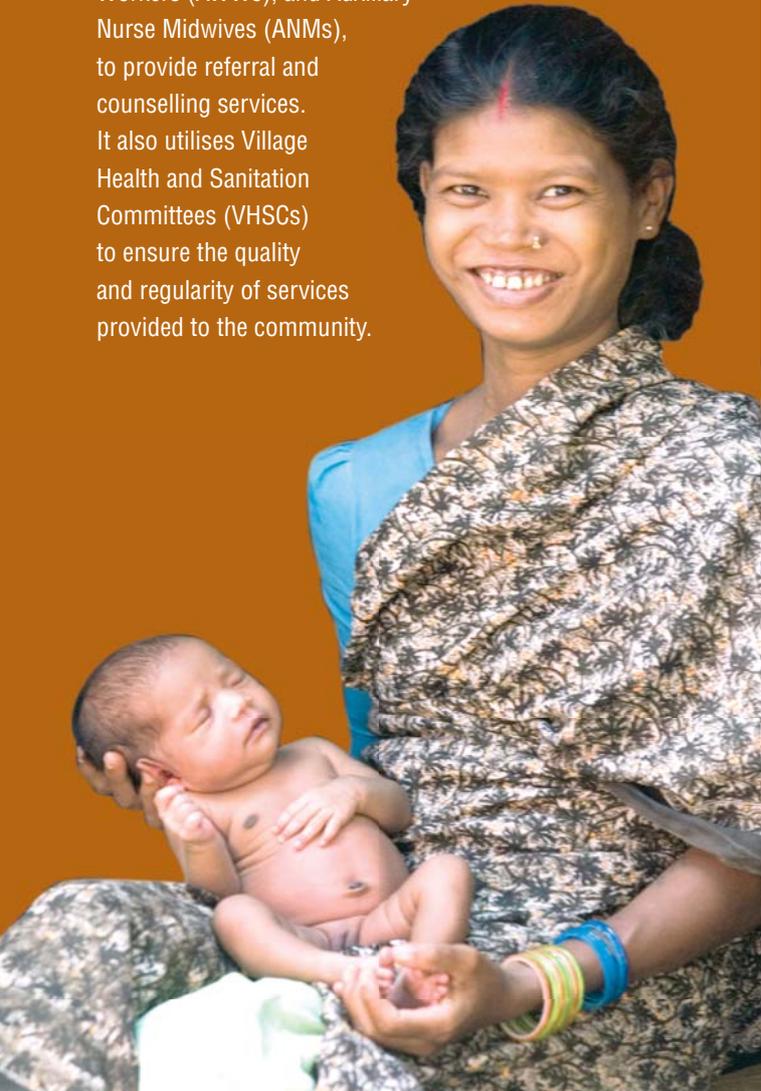
Sure Start is aimed at bringing sustainable improvements in maternal and newborn health through effective community action in Barabanki and Raebareilly districts of Uttar Pradesh (UP). The project covers 5.5 million people living in 1,500 villages within these two districts. The initiative's twin objectives are: to significantly increase individual, household, and community action to improve maternal and newborn health, and to enhance systematic and institutional capabilities to ensure such improvements are sustained. Sure Start uses awareness and advocacy, community mobilisation, household empowerment, and household services and commodities as innovative approaches to remove misconceptions related to maternal and newborn health. The project works closely with families of pregnant women and newborns through Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), to provide referral and counselling services. It also utilises Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSCs) to ensure the quality and regularity of services provided to the community.



Sure Start
Location: Uttar Pradesh

AIMS

- To provide greater access to health services for pregnant women and newborn babies to improve health and reduce child mortality
- To equip women with the right knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours to ensure a healthier future for themselves and their communities
- To strengthen government systems, and influence policies regarding maternal and neo-natal health
- To make maternal and neo-natal health a priority in communities and to raise awareness, especially with regard to diet, regular immunisation, institutionalising deliveries, and state-run health programmes



SPECIFICS

India ranks 73 out of 77 middle-income countries in the “Best place to be a mother” category according to latest reports. India still ranks 1 out of 12 countries that account for two-thirds of under five and maternal deaths in the world.

One of the reasons for these figures is the lack of well-trained female front line health care workers. In recognition of this, CARE’s Sure Start project has:

- Mobilised 799 (392 in Raebareilly and 407 in Barabanki) VHSCs
- Facilitated behavioural change through thematic monthly meetings of 1,969 mother groups (1,046 in Raebareilly and 923 in Barabanki)
- Facilitated the development of village health plans and linkages with VHSC untied funds to enable plans to be converted into action
- Supported *Gram Panchayats* in establishing emergency referral transportation for women in labour or facing maternal health related problems within the project intervention area
- Organised extensive training of VHSCs and ASHAs in record keeping, danger signs screening, roles and responsibilities in health care and management, and sustainability planning



More than 785 ASHAs have been fully trained on maternal and childcare related issues, and there are eight ASHA mentoring group meetings organised regularly in both districts. In this way, maternal and newborn health issues have become prominent within communities and many lives have been improved or saved.

STATISTICS

Some of the Sure Start achievements are:

- 81 percent of pregnant women receive two tetanus vaccinations
- 81 percent of deliveries are conducted in institutions
- 94 percent of newborns have their umbilical cords cut with a new blade
- 71 percent of VHSC members are organising monthly meetings
- 57 percent of VHSC members are aware of their roles and responsibilities

CASE STUDY

Renu Mishra is 26 and lives in a village of Raebareilly district in UP. She is an ASHA worker and is committed to saving the lives of mothers and newborns. Due to her perseverance, she has successfully managed to halve the number of maternal deaths in her village. She maintains a record of all the local pregnant women and visits them regularly to monitor their health. For Renu, this freedom to work and be mobile has not come without struggle.

When Renu was a housewife, she could not make any decisions in her own home and had to consult her in-laws on everything. Even her desire to become an ASHA worker was vetoed by her mother-in-law but with the help of her husband she took the initiative and started working regardless. Convincing her family was just the first barrier she crossed as the villagers, she was looked upon her as a novice. This, along with her initial lack of knowledge regarding maternal and newborn health, prevented her from being taken seriously by the people in her village. However, with CARE’s training and orientation as a part of the Sure Start project, she became confident and comfortable in interacting with her community and providing them with helpful counselling. The breakthrough came when her advice saved the life of a mother and child and helped her win the respect of the villagers.

Now Renu facilitates Mothers’ Group meetings and proactively counsels pregnant or lactating women, encouraging healthy practices through pre and postpartum home visits. Renu has also initiated the formation of five groups of women who voluntarily support her in generating awareness and enabling the adoption of best maternal and newborn health practices. Renu was awarded Rs. 5,000 by the health department for the maximum number of institutional deliveries, sterilisation, and immunisation cases, as well as for the registration of pregnant women. She has become an inspiration to others.