

MSD launches initiative to decrease pregnant women mortality

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MSD for Mothers has launched its global initiative for helping reduce maternal mortality in India. It has partnered with three leading non-governmental organizations to improve the quality of healthcare that pregnant women in India receive through the private sector. The Hindustan Latex Family Planning Promotion Trust (HLFPPT), Pathfinder International with World Health Partners (Pathfinder), and the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood with Gram Vaani (WRA) together will reach nearly 500,000 pregnant women in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand - areas with some of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the country. The announcement to this effect was made on May 14, 2013 at New Delhi.

MSD for Mothers is a 10-year, US \$500 million global initiative launched in 2011 by Merck Sharp and Dohme (MSD), known as Merck in the United States and Canada, to help create a world where no woman dies from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

"We have made great strides towards Millennium Development Goal 5, but we know there's more work to do to reach that target," Mrs Mamta Sharma, chairperson, National Commission for Women said speaking at the India launch. "These new partnerships demonstrate innovative ways of working together to address this issue and bring India closer to our goal."

Most care in India is provided by the private sector, which includes a diverse array of independent physicians, nurses, and midwives as well as clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, and health insurers. Additionally, private care is often supported by ambulance services, mobile service providers, and financial institutions.

"Maternal mortality is one of the oldest and most preventable health tragedies in the world today. While India has made progress in addressing this, there is still a lot that can be done collectively by the Government, NGOs and the private sector," said Mr Naveen Rao, MD, lead, MSD for Mothers. "Our focus in India is to work with partners who have the capability to improve maternal health care services delivered through the private sector and ultimately decrease the number of women still dying during pregnancy and childbirth."

MSD for Mothers and its partners are working to accelerate India's progress towards the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal 5, reducing the global maternal mortality rate by 75 percent by 2015. This goal is not currently on track to be achieved. While India has reduced its rate by approximately 67 percent since 1990, Indian women are still dying during pregnancy and childbirth and there is still a lot that can be done to help prevent maternal mortality.

These partnerships will complement the government's initiatives to reduce maternal mortality. Specifically, efforts in India will focus on making private care more affordable by offering private providers standardized tools, protocols, and branding across networks of health facilities; improving quality of care by training doctors, nurses, and health workers and offering women new ways to rate the care they receive; and connecting women in remote areas to doctors and nurses in cities through telecommunication and internet.

Talking about the benefits of the launch to India, Mr KG Ananthakrishnan, managing director, MSD India said, "We are proud to have partnered with such prestigious organizations and launch our global MSD for Mothers initiative in India. I believe the project has great potential to benefit our country in helping reduce maternal mortality with a collaborative approach."