

# Project Jawhar

27 year old Rama Devi, a resident of Jawhar felt constantly weak and tired. Her haemoglobin (HB) read a dangerously low 3.5. In her fourth month of pregnancy, she was fighting for her life and the life of her yet to be born baby. It was a blessing that she visited one of the medical camps organised at Jawhar. Today, she has a healthy baby and is doing fine herself.

Close your eyes for a second and picture a happy Rama Devi with her new- born. Doesn't it bring a smile to your face? Today, there are over 4000 smiles in Jawhar, a remote district in Palghar, Maharashtra. Around 4000 healthy nursing mothers with their babies motivate us at Project Jawhar, which is in its second year.

Project Jawhar aims at making a positive difference in bringing down the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Socio-economic and demographic factors contribute in a big way, to the poor MMR in India. When we take a look at the lack of facilities across the country, it is not surprising to note that India fares badly in this area.

Jawhar draws on the Three Delays Model which recognises the barriers women face in achieving the timely and effective medical care needed to prevent deaths occurring in pregnancy and childbirth. *Delay one:* in decision to seek care stems from socio economic factors like the financial burden, a poor understanding of risk factors in pregnancy and a previous poor experience of healthcare. *Delay two:* in reaching care due to the non-availability of proper transportation and distance to healthcare centres and hospitals and a poor road network and *Delay three:* in receiving adequate healthcare due to the lack of medical supplies, inadequately trained medical staff and inadequate referral systems. With women in rural areas still subject to all these delays, their health issues remain unattended. A lack of awareness and knowledge pose an additional challenge.

OPPI's Project Jawhar, a joint initiative with the Government of Maharashtra, the Rotary Club, Mumbai, the Indian Medical Association and NGO Pragati Pratishthan, aims to promote awareness around the importance of reducing delays in emergency treatment and encourages local women's groups to understand and accept the principles of antenatal care, postnatal care, spacing children and child immunisation.

- In addition, project workers have to deal with the social issues of repeated pregnancies till the birth of a boy child, a practice still rampant in rural India. They have to counsel women about the physical and emotional trauma of repeated pregnancies and their long-term effects on health. Focus is maintained on the concepts of family planning and the importance of the right diet during pregnancy and lactation.

Many women participate in the antenatal and postnatal camps, which are held periodically. The women are educated on the importance of good health and given tips on leading a healthy life. All participants in the project receive regular health checks and their newborns receive paediatric care as well.

Today, Project Jawhar has helped make a real difference in the lives of the women in Jawhar. Like Rama Devi, many women who initially registered in the camps recorded threatening low HB levels. However, Jawhar has registered a rise in HB levels amongst women from 5 to 9 and proudly recorded a zero mortality rate. OPPI member companies have stepped in with free supplies of iron and calcium tablets and injectables for 100 days of pregnancy. This helps provide cover for good health among expectant mothers during the critical period of pregnancy.

Sadly, women in rural India are denied basic access to healthcare. Through Jawhar, our endeavour is to slowly build the health literacy levels among sections of such women and provide the support and care women need during this phase. Saving a life is as critical as giving birth to one! Through Jawhar we aim at doing both.



- The world has just one more year to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- The MDGs address multi-dimensional issues and manifestations of the extreme poverty prevailing in the world
- Eight MDGs are specified with 18 quantifiable targets and these will be evaluated by 48 indicators
- The fifth MDG is to improve the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)
- Though the MMR in India has declined from 398 to 178 per 100,000 live births, the objective is to reduce this figure to 109 by 2015