

# Policy Development

Nepal Safer Motherhood Project

Issue Sheet 1

## The Challenge

Complementing the interventions at district level, NSMP has placed considerable emphasis on working with the government and other national level partners to bring positive changes in safe motherhood policies and planning. The key challenge is to ensure that policy and planning is rooted in a national and international evidence base, by incorporating learning from district level experiences and drawing on global lessons. NSMP has endeavoured to support initiatives of emerging importance in Nepal such as skilled attendance and safe abortion, which require considerable changes in existing policies, and to broaden inputs to areas not



traditionally considered a part of safe motherhood planning, such as blood transfusion policy, which may have a significant impact on obstetric care.

## Key Issues

With other national stakeholders, NSMP contributed to the development of two key National Strategies, the 15-year National Safe Motherhood Plan (2002-17), and the National Safe Motherhood Information Education Communication/Behaviour Change Communication Strategy (2002-07), both of which established a foundation for safe motherhood work over the next few years. NSMP has

also worked with government and other partners on a wide range of specific issues touching on safe motherhood.

Emergency obstetric care has been a major focus of the project, and to complement district level work in hospitals and health posts NSMP has worked with national level partners to support skill enhancement of medical officers in the provision of basic emergency obstetric care, and of obstetricians in comprehensive emergency obstetric care. Combined with this, expanding the role of nurses and paramedics to provide emergency obstetric care, including anaesthetic assistant training for nurses, has been an important area of work. Blood transfusion services are an essential part of emergency care, and NSMP has provided support for the development of a National Blood Transfusion Policy.



In order to establish and maintain the high standards of care women deserve, National Quality of Care Guidelines have been developed, and an Emergency Obstetric Care monitoring system, and NSMP has been a central player in this work. A key area of support has been the skilled attendance debate, which is an important part of the effort to ensure that women in communities have access to basic midwifery care and referral services in case of emergency. NSMP has also supported research on the household costs of accessing maternal care, and barriers experienced.

NSMP was an active voice in the effort to legalise abortion in Nepal, in recognition of the added burden of maternal mortality that unsafe abortions represented, and acknowledging access to safe abortion as a human right.

## Achievements and Lessons Learned

During the course of work on a wide range of safe motherhood policy issues, NSMP has seen key strategy documents approved by the government and implemented. This has been achieved through partnerships and



After the reform of the law in 2002 and the Cabinet approval of the Procedural Order for implementation at the end of 2003, NSMP has continued to support the Family Health Division in the provision of staff training and equipment to enable hospitals to provide comprehensive abortion services.

co-operation between government departments and non-government stakeholders. The Safe Motherhood Sub-Committee, of which NSMP was a founder member, has been a key mechanism for policy discussions and information sharing, representing a major step forward in formal co-operation. Acknowledging that no single organisation can bring change alone, individual partners have brought different skills and experiences to bear on problem solving, enabling government departments to benefit from the learning of other stakeholders.

## Questions Remaining

Policy development is an ongoing challenge, and a number of specific strategies are currently under discussion. These include a Human Resource Development Strategy for Safe Motherhood, and within this a Skilled Attendance Strategy, and a National Blood Transfusion Strategy. Mechanisms for reducing the burden of costs for safe motherhood services on households are also needed. Finally, linkages need to be established between the National Safe Motherhood Programme and the health reform agenda of the Nepal Health Sector Programme.



The Nepal Safer Motherhood Project (NSMP) was initiated in 1997 as a collaboration between the Nepal Ministry of Health and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).