Identifying and addressing structural barriers to Maternal and Child Healthcare: A Study of Neonatal Mortality in Hard-to-Reach Areas of Shahdol District, Madhya Pradesh

Internship Report Submitted to

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By

Suramya Nair (1634)

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Dr. Seema Mehta

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Chapter 1: Introduction about the organisation

IHAT was established in 2003 as a charitable trust under the Indian Trust Act of 1882. It is registered with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs under the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules 2021, with the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976, and with the Income Tax Act, 1961 under section 12A(a).

In order to accomplish public health objectives, we collaborate closely with the Indian government and state governments. Their work focuses on improving nutrition for women and children, producing notable advancements in reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health, and fortifying health systems. They also aim to prevent and control HIV and tuberculosis. We base our efforts on the Sustainable Development Goals.

An eminent non-governmental organization committed to improving public health in India is the India Health Action Trust (IHAT). IHAT was established with the intention of strengthening health systems and enhancing health outcomes. To this end, it closely collaborates with local communities, governmental organizations, and international organizations to develop, carry out, and evaluate evidence-based and significant health initiatives.

Chapter 2: IHAT's Introduction, Vision and Mission

An essential case study for comprehending the difficulties of rural healthcare, especially with regard to maternal and child health, is the Shahdol District in Madhya Pradesh, India. The district's difficult topographical characteristics—such as its seasonal rivers, rough terrain, and dense forests—make it difficult for residents to get treatment. Shahdol continues to report high rates of neonatal death, infant mortality, and under-5 mortality, with estimates standing at 43, 72, and 80 per 1,000 live births, respectively, despite numerous programs targeted at enhancing maternal and child healthcare services. These obstacles include weak communication networks, inaccessible areas during certain seasons, challenging terrain, and a lack of roadways. But the consistently high rates of neonatal death in these regions suggest that, when mother and child health outcomes are taken into account, the present definition of HRA falls short.
Through an analysis of secondary data on neonatal fatalities from the Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) in Shahdol District during the previous three years, this research seeks to redefine hard-to-reach locations from a mother and child health viewpoint. The study will look into the particular obstacles causing high rates of newborn mortality in these regions and suggest a more inclusive definition of HRA that takes healthcare accessibility into account. In doing so, the study aims to offer practical suggestions for legislative changes intended to enhance healthcare access and reducing neonatal mortality in these vulnerable regions.

Vision: In order to promote healthier communities and a more just society, IHAT envisions a world in which every person has access to high-quality healthcare.

Mission: The organization's goal is to improve public health by encouraging innovation, bolstering health systems, and advancing evidence-based policies. IHAT seeks to improve everyone's access to, affordability of, and effectiveness of healthcare, with an emphasis on underprivileged and vulnerable groups.

Chapter 3: Objectives of Internship

1. To analyse neonatal mortality data from the SNCU over the last three years, focusing on deaths occurring in hard-to-reach areas.

2. To identify structural and accessibility barriers contributing to high neonatal mortality rates in these areas.

3. To propose a refined definition of hard-to-reach areas that incorporates maternal and child health and accessibility factors.

Chapter 4: Key Focus Areas of IHAT

Maternal and child health
Maternal and child health is a major focus of IHAT since it is acknowledged as a vital area for enhancing public health outcomes. The group strives to guarantee that expectant mothers, new mothers, and postpartum women receive all the care they need. This comprises:

- Antenatal Care (ANC): To keep an eye on the health of both the mother and the fetus, IHAT advocates for routine antenatal checkups. This includes checking for issues, giving the required immunizations, and giving dietary advice.
- Safe Delivery Procedures: To guarantee safe deliveries, the organization advocates for trained birth attendants and the provision of emergency obstetric care. This entails educating medical professionals on the best labour and delivery techniques.
- Postnatal Care (PNC): Postpartum care is essential to the health of the mother and the infant. IHAT makes certain that moms get obtain advice on caring for your newborn, nursing, and recovering after giving birth. Frequent examinations aid in the early identification and management of any issues.

- Community-Based Interventions: IHAT uses community health professionals to connect with expectant moms and recently gave birth, offering support and information at the local level.

  Nutrition:

  Another important area of concern for IHAT is nutrition since it has a direct impact on both the health of expectant and nursing mothers and the growth and development of children. Important tactics consist of:
- Breastfeeding Promotion: Because nursing gives babies vital nutrients and immunity, IHAT promotes breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of a child's life.
- Complimentary Feeding: In order to satisfy the infants' increasing nutritional needs, the organization teaches mothers on the significance of starting to introduce appropriate supplemental foods at six months along with continued needs of the child.
- Nutritional Supplements: In order to avoid deficiencies that could harm the mother and the unborn child, IHAT encourages pregnant and nursing women to take supplements like folic acid and iron.
- Community nutrition programs: These involve community health workers who monitor the nutritional status of mothers and children and educate the public on healthy eating habits.

  Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS:

  IHAT is actively engaged in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS. Their all-encompassing strategy consists of:

- Prevention Programs: These consist of condom distribution, awareness campaigns, and instruction on safe behaviors to stop the spread of HIV. IHAT raises awareness of

the value of good cough hygiene and preventative care for high-risk populations in relation to tuberculosis.

- Diagnosis and Testing: IHAT makes sure that testing facilities are easily accessible and that individuals are motivated to undergo testing. Reducing transmission and ensuring effective treatment depend on early detection.
- Treatment Support: IHAT assists individuals with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in obtaining and following treatment plans. This covers Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course (DOTS) for tuberculosis and antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV.
- Community Engagement: Assisting people impacted to seek support and assistance by interacting with communities to lessen the stigma attached to TB and HIV/AIDS.

Strengthening of Health Systems:

Any health intervention's success is contingent upon having a strong health system. IHAT strives to improve health systems in a number of ways, such as:

- Training Healthcare Providers: To guarantee that physicians, nurses, and community health workers are adequately prepared to deliver high-quality treatment, ongoing training and capacity building are necessary.
- Advocacy for Policies: IHAT works with government agencies to promote laws that bolster health systems by boosting financing, creating comprehensive health programs, and enhancing infrastructure.
- Infrastructure development is the process of improving a health facility's physical infrastructure so that it can better serve the requirements of the public. This involves making certain that facilities have dependable energy, clean water, and necessary medical equipment.
- Data & Information methods: Putting in place reliable methods for managing and gathering data to track health outcomes

Public Health:

IHAT understands that community involvement is critical to long-term health gains. Among their community health programs are:

- Health education is the process of educating people on a range of health-related issues, such as family planning, diet, cleanliness, and illness prevention, so they may make educated decisions about their health.
- Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) is the practice of influencing communities' beneficial health behaviors via the use of focused communication tactics. Peer education initiatives, community gatherings, and mainstream media campaigns could all be part of this.
- Community mobilization: to participate actively in their own health is known as community mobilization. This entails establishing health committees, educating community health volunteers, and encouraging collaborations between medical professionals and the general public.
- Access to Health care: Making efforts to guarantee that everyone in the community, especially the underprivileged and marginalized groups, has access to health care. This encompasses outreach.

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