The First 1,000 Days of a New Life

ChildFund India provides early childhood healthcare and pre-school education services at more than 2,000 Early Childhood Development Centres (Anganwadis) across the country, reaching over 80,000 children. Our centres also serve as community hubs where over 150,000 mothers and primary caregivers have learned child care practices, positive parenting skills, as well as received nutrition supplements and immunizations for their children. ChildFund India has also trained over 2,100 health service providers as part of our sustainability efforts. By working through government run Anganwadis, we ensure that our program amplifies local initiatives, rather than replaces them.

Who We Are

Since 1951, ChildFund India has been representing the voices of deprived, excluded, and vulnerable children in India regardless of their race, creed, and gender. Through long-term partnerships, ChildFund India annually reaches nearly two million children, youth and families in the most hard-to-reach areas and empowers parents and community members alike to be agents of change.

We work with over 6000 communities throughout 14 States and one Union Territory through our child-centred interventions aiming to bring about lasting changes in the lives of children. Our interventions span from maternal-child health, early childhood development, education, as well as youth engagement and livelihoods, with a cross-cutting focus on child protection, gender equality, and emergency response/disaster risk management.

ChildFund India is a nationalized entity of ChildFund International, a global child development and protection agency serving more than 19.7 million children and their families in 30 countries.

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The Problem

The first 1,000 days, from conception through the first two years, represent one of the most crucial times in a child’s life. More than 80% of physical and mental growth occurs during this period\(^1\), while stunted development often proves to be irreversible. Consequently, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have enumerated several ambitious targets to be reached by the end of 2030:

- to end preventable deaths of newborns and children less than five years of age,
- reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births, and
- ensure universal access to vaccines\(^2\).

In 2015, the global maternal mortality rate (MMR) was 216 per 100,000 births\(^3\).

India has a long way to go to reach these targets. The maternal mortality rate remains at 174/100,000 live births with approximately 696,000 neonatal deaths per year\(^4\), while 70% of Indian children aged 6–59 months are reported to be anemic\(^5\).

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1. National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition: http://www.hmhb.org/2014/03/1000-days-matter/
2. UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300
5. UNICEF India Nutrition Facts: http://unicef.in/Story/1124/Nutrition

Solution

ChildFund India proposes a three year project to provide comprehensive maternal and child healthcare support to 500 mothers and 1,000 children under two years of age during this critical 1,000 day period, featuring:

**Pre-Natal Health Innovations for Pregnant Mothers:** thorough monitoring throughout the pregnancy period, ensuring that pregnant mothers attend all three recommended antenatal checkups, institutional delivery planning support, early identification of potential issues and subsequent referrals to appropriate treatment.

**Post-Natal Health Innovations for New Mothers and Infants (Ages 0-2):** community-based health sessions to capacitate caregivers on: correct feeding practices, personal health & hygiene practices, ensuring timely vaccinations and doctors' appointments for newborns and young children, as well as identification and management of childhood illnesses, such as diarrhea and acute respiratory infections.

**Projected Impact**

- Increased mothers’ and caregivers’ understanding of infant health care practices.
- Increased incidence of mothers’ safe delivery in hospital.
- Decreased incidence of infant morbidity and mortality.
- Reduced cases of debilitating childhood illness, such as diarrhea and chest infection.