

Motorcycle Ambulance In Chhattisgarh Has Saved Over 200 Lives In Remote Villages Of Bastar

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Help arriving in the form of a motorcycle ambulance.

When eight months pregnant Sukmi's water broke she was in Ongnarpal, a village deep in the jungle of Chhattisgarh where four wheelers cannot reach and the hospital was miles away. However, help arrived in the form of a motorcycle ambulance and Sukmi made it to the hospital "just in time" and delivered a beautiful baby girl. The motorcycle-ambulance is a new concept in India that is saving lives in remote regions where people had been dying because they could not make it to the hospital on time. Sukmi and her baby would not have survived had it not been for the motorcycle-ambulance that was able to ferry her from her remote village and take her to the civil hospital in Narayanpur district. Her case is not exceptional. The motorcycle-ambulance has saved the lives of over 200 pregnant women and helped see a drop in maternal and infant mortality rate in the Maoist-hit Narayanpur district of Bastar division in Chhattisgarh.



The ambulance, which had seen success in African countries, is a modified four-stroke motorcycle fitted with a side-carriage customised for the comfort of the patient. Given the maze-type forest terrain, which can perplex any outsider, these two wheelers are driven by local riders only, who are trained to provide basic necessary first aid. Health specialist at UNICEF, Ajay Trakroo says the motorcycle-ambulance project was initiated last year and supported by the UNICEF in collaboration with an NGO, Saathi Samaj Sevi Sanstha, and the Health Department of the state government. "Pregnant women are our main focus in the area as mortality rate is high in this conflict bound region of Chhattisgarh. With this experiment we are trying to provide necessary health care to the pregnant women of this Maoist-affected tribal and hard-to-reach forest area," Trakroo told IANS. He said the motorcycle ambulance's USP is that it can be operated in hard to reach areas. It is a referral ambulance, that means it only ferries the patient to the hospital. As of now there is only one motorcycle-ambulance in the entire state which serves the pregnant women and other serious patients in whole of Bastar division. On expansion of the project, Trakroo said that ten more motorcycle ambulances will be deployed soon. "Though 108 ambulance services operate in Narayanpur, these cannot reach deep into the forest or hilly terrain where many villages are situated. This is where the motorcycle ambulance plays a vital role. We will bring 10 more motorcycle ambulances in a few months," Trakroo said. The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Raipur is working to improve the design of the motorcycle ambulance to enhance efficiency. "We are focusing on increasing the power of the motorcycle and the stability of the ambulance with help of NIT," Trakroo added. The ambulance costs Rs 1.7 lakh and Rs 15,000 per month is investment to keep it running. Founding member of Saathi NGO, Bhupesh Tiwari says that before the motorcycle ambulance was introduced cases of unorganised delivery were high and mothers used to die often due to lack of proper treatment. He said that the motorcycle-ambulance has successfully ferried over 300 patients to the hospitals from "adverse areas", of whom 80 per cent are pregnant women. "After the inception of this project the number of organised deliveries has increased in this conflict bound region. It will certainly improve the infant as well as maternal mortality

rate in the region," Tiwari told IANS. First published by The Indian Express