

Press Release V1

Five years on, Aastrika Foundation has solutions for implementation of high-quality maternal and ancillary health care services in India

On track to transform birthing for 25 million women in India by 2030

Bangalore, May 9, 2024: Five years after its inception, Aastrika Foundation, a leading non-profit committed to promoting Respectful Maternity Care, has made critical progress in providing essential maternal and ancillary healthcare services to women, in Karnataka and other parts of the country.

One of the key focus areas of the organisation is capacity building and health systems strengthening. This is done through Aastrika Sphere, a comprehensive capacity building solution with a focus on both knowledge and skills. Aastrika Sphere offers digital and in-person training programmes to a wide variety of healthcare and allied professionals. As of today, Aastrika Sphere has more than 95,000 learners on their digital platform. The in-person initiative of Aastrika Sphere has trained more than 1200 healthcare workers.

Aastrika Foundation is also supporting the Government of India's Nurse Practitioner in Midwifery program in the state of Karnataka. For the same, the organisation has collaborated with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, GoK and UNICEF. Under this programme, a National Midwifery Training Institute (NMTI) has been established in Vanivilas Hospital, Bengaluru, to train midwifery educators. A State Midwifery Training Institute (SMTI) has been established in Cheluvamba Hospital, Mysuru, which is training midwives. At the NMTI and SMTI, midwives and trainee midwives have supported 475 births, till date, ensuring implementation of evidence-based midwifery principles, including Respectful Maternity Care, supporting the presence of a labour companion of choice, ensuring privacy, and informed consent on medical procedures. Remarkably, of these 475 births, fewer than 15% required episiotomies, over 93% involved labour companions, and 95% of newborns had immediate skin-to-skin contact with their mothers. These figures are very much in-line with international standards of maternal care.

Aastrika Foundation also focuses on advocating for the rights of childbearing women, continuous professional development for all cadres of healthcare workers, and increasing the understanding and acceptance of professional midwifery among various stakeholders.

Dr Janhavi Nilekani, Founder and Chairperson, Aastrika Foundation said, "Our work over the past five years has notably improved birthing experiences for mothers and newborns in India, particularly Karnataka. Our approach prioritises empowering midwives to deliver compassionate, evidence-based care. This not only enhances maternal and neonatal health outcomes through implementation of best practices, but also supports the emotional and psychological well-being of mothers during childbirth. We are grateful to our partners for their unwavering support in this journey."

With the goal of reaching 25 million women annually by 2030, Aastrika Foundation is steadfast in its mission to transform childbirth experiences in India. By empowering mothers, accelerating capacity building, and advocating for respectful birthing practices, Aastrika Foundation aims to catalyse a positive change throughout the healthcare system, ensuring every woman receives the dignity and respect she deserves during childbirth.

About Aastrika Foundation

Aastrika Foundation is a non-profit formally named AastarUrmika Health Systems. It is a part of the Nilekani Philanthropies umbrella and was established in 2019 by Dr. Janhavi Nilekani with a belief that all child-bearing women should have access to timely, high-quality medical care and to core rights, including, but not limited to, privacy, the companionship of a loved one, informed consent regarding medical interventions, and an abuse-free birthing experience.

As an organisation working towards the implementation of high-quality maternity care, Aastrika Foundation primarily works towards addressing the public health challenges of 'Too Much, Too Soon', and 'Too Little, Too Late'.