

Maintaining Village Health Sub Centres

Although the government is responsible for, and has made a provision to maintain Village Health Sub Centres, it is a low priority. With the drought problems Rajasthan faces there are more efforts into water management and drought mitigation. Maintenance budgets are often left unspent; some centres don't have electricity or a hand pump nearby. Safe water is needed not only for deliveries, but for drinking water, so women avoid the centre.

GVNML collected information on the facilities of each sub centre in the focus villages and brought the Gram Panchayat, village leaders and block level government officials together to create improvement plans. By getting these three cogs moving together, the system is able to write recommendations for each sub centre and implement them. Generally we recommend that sub centres have a hand pump with soak pit, that the centre is electrified, and that it is equipped well enough so the nurse can stay overnight to assist in deliveries.

In the past sub centre nurse posts had been vacant for up to two years. Now, if there is a vacancy we approach local women and other contacts, and have been successful in filling two village posts through our advocacy efforts.

The impact of maintaining village health sub centres is far reaching. Hygienic deliveries can take place there, saving mother and child's lives, complications after delivery can be monitored and immunisations and baby health checks can be carried out.