



Department of Public Health and Family Welfare,  
Maharashtra State



# Vatsalya

Strengthening the continuum of care from the pre-pregnancy  
period till 1000 days of life

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## Forward



Prof. Dr. Tanajirao Sawant  
Hon. Health Minister, Public Health Department  
Government of Maharashtra

Maharashtra has achieved remarkable progress in the reduction of maternal and child death rates in recent times. However, we need to ensure we reach goal of zero preventable maternal and child deaths to achieve better health.

Vatsalya is a program which follows life cycle approach to provide quality services to married and pregnant women along with young children. This program will strengthen the efforts to improve pregnancy outcome along with child survival and development in the state of Maharashtra. I am sure that this initiative will be able to provide dignified, respectful and quality health care services to the mothers and infants.

I believe this document would be used effectively at the district and corporation levels to provide quality services to beneficiaries and fill in the gaps at various life stages leading to reduced maternal and child mortality.

## Forward



Milind Mhaiskar, I.A.S.  
Additional Chief Secretary, Public Health Department  
Government of Maharashtra

The state has made good progress in reducing maternal and child death rates in recent times. For instance, the Infant mortality rates have declined to 16 per 1000 live births. Similarly Maternal Mortality Ratio has come down to 33 per 100,000 live births during 2018-20. State has already achieved SDG targets for neonatal and maternal mortality.

But Sustainable Developmental Goals lays emphasis on not only on improving survival but also on promotion of overall health and wellbeing of children. Evidence suggest that the first 1000 days of life are critical for optimal development of child. One of the main strategies for further reduction of maternal and child mortality is to integrate the most recent evidence into routine practice. Vatsalya is a program which aims at reducing low birth babies and congenital anomalies by preparing women for pregnancy and improving perinatal outcomes through incorporation of antenatal care, postnatal care, HBNC & HBYC which will further contribute to reduction of maternal and child mortality in the state.

I am happy that Public Health Department of Government of Maharashtra has rolled out Vatsalya program to improve pregnancy and child health outcome which will go a long way in generating evidence for reducing maternal and child mortality in the state.

## Forward



Dheeraj Kumar, I.A.S.  
Commissioner Health Services, MD (NHM)  
Government of Maharashtra

Maharashtra has one of the most resilient health systems in India. National Health Mission and Public Health Department of Government of Maharashtra are committed to providing quality health services to the population of the state.

India has the largest number of low-birth-weight babies in the world. Low birth weight is defined as newborn with birth weight less than 2500 gram. These babies are at increased risk of under-five mortality, stunting and poor cognitive development, and of chronic disease in the adult life. Innovative strategies need to be implemented for reduction of the maternal and under five mortality and for preventing low birth weight in the state.

Protecting and promoting woman's reproductive health can advance the health not only the woman but also of the newborn and child in a major way. It is said that teach a man, you teach an individual, teach a woman and you teach whole generations. Promoting health of girls and women is the most effective way for promoting the health of entire family.

I am happy that Vatslya Initiative is being implemented in Maharashtra State which aims at promoting health of women during pre-conception and antenatal period for preventing maternal and child deaths and for preventing low birth weight. I am sure that the Vatslya interventions will help in further prevention of maternal and child deaths.



Dr Nitin Ambadekar, MD, PHD  
Additional Director Health Services Pune,  
Public Health Department

Maharashtra is one of the better performing states with second lowest maternal mortality ratio among large states in India as per SRS Bulletin 2018-20. However, as compared to the developed countries, this rate is still high. It is critical to scale up the coverage and quality of reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child health and adolescent (RMNCH-AH) services across all health facilities. Further, following the principle of continuum of care, services and healthy behaviors must be promoted across home and community, outreach, and facility levels as well as along the life cycle. Emerging evidence in the areas of RMNCH-AH warrant continuous adaptation of these evidence into routine practice for further reduction of maternal and child and morbidity and mortality in the state.

Healthy outcomes of the pregnancy need an optimal environment and good nutrition for conception and fetal growth during pregnancy. Worldwide, about 40% of pregnancies are unplanned, resulting in missed opportunities for vital interventions before and during pregnancy. The gap in the continuum of services after adolescence till the antenatal period needs to be addressed. Current programmes do not guarantee that women enter pregnancy in good health. “Vatsalya” as a strategic intervention package ranging from preconception care to child care till the first 2 years of life. The “Vatsalya” program is designed to improve pregnancy and child health outcomes through a set of interventions.

Vatslyya is a Comprehensive Program to improve pre-pregnancy health of women and follow up through ANC and growth monitoring of children up to 2 years of age to improve perinatal and postnatal outcomes. It is a comprehensive program to cover Pre-preganancy – Pregnancy – Post pregnancy up to 1000 days with emphasis on some key indicators. It aims at reducing low birth babies, congenital anomalies, and utilization of the pre pregnancy window by preparing women for pregnancy and improving peri-natal outcomes.

This document contains Vatslyya program objectives, activities, healthcare packages, convergence, process, and outcome indicators for monitoring of the program. I hope this document will help for implementation of Vatslyya program for reducing future maternal and child deaths.

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# Vatsalya

## Strengthening the continuum of care from the pre-pregnancy period to the post-natal period till 1000 days to improve the maternal and child health outcomes

### 1. Introduction

"Vatsalya" is a comprehensive health promotion program to enhance and focus on implementing existing MCH services from Pre-Pregnancy to postnatal. It is designed to ensure an optimal environment for conception and support healthy foetal growth during pregnancy and perinatal outcome by continuously tracking important pre- and Postnatal indicators. This program contributes to existing maternal and child health initiatives to intensify the efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality by reducing the prevalence of Low Birth Weight.

"Vatsalya" emphasises the Pre-pregnancy period of the life course continuum, which will be extended to healthy pregnancies and healthy Childbirths. Vatsalya is intended to improve pregnancy and child health outcomes through a set of interventions. The primary focus is restoring maternal health in the pre-pregnancy period and adequate maternal weight gain in the pre-pregnancy and ANC period. To reduce low birth weight babies. It also promotes the health and well-being of women and couples.

There will be a convergence of various health care and nutrition programs during this period and a comprehensive package of preventive, promotive and curative care for creating a safe environment for conception and child growth during the antenatal period.

### 2. Rationale

About 40% of pregnancies worldwide are unplanned (WHO, 2013). These unexpected pregnancies often result in missed opportunities for vital interventions before and during pregnancy to ensure a safe pregnancy for healthy outcomes. This highlights the significance of screening and initiating health care from the Pre-pregnancy period to ensure beneficial pregnancy outcomes and its overall impact on child growth and development.

The pre-pregnancy phase is envisaged as an integral part of the life course continuum. Although most of the services intended for preconception care are covered in the RMNCHA matrix, a specific programme addressing the preconception period is missing. After adolescence, when women enter their marital life, there is a gap in the continuum of services till the antenatal period. Even where vital public health programmes are in place following the life course, they do not guarantee that women enter pregnancy in good health.

In 2013, the WHO advocated building regional and national capacity to implement preconception programmes in its policy brief. Further, INAP identifies preconception care as one of the six pillars of interventions across the life stages to impact stillbirths and newborn health. Hence, a comprehensive health programme is required to address the issues during the preconception period and extend its targeted interventions until the baby turns two.

According to SDGs and INAP, Maharashtra is committed to achieving single-digit neonatal mortality by 2030. This emphasises the need for targeted interventions from the pre-pregnancy period to the first 1000 days of life to ensure safe pregnancy outcomes and to achieve proper growth and development of the child.

As a part of the state strategy to prevent maternal and child mortality and morbidity, the "Vatsalya" programme is envisaged to provide a package of promotive, preventive and curative services by addressing the existing gaps in the continuum of care.

### 3. Objectives

The Vatsalya programme is intended to reduce all-preventable morbidity and mortalities among mothers and children by preparing for conception and growth monitoring. It will ensure quality health care from pre-pregnancy to a child's first 1000 days of life. The main objectives of the programme are given as follows;

- Reduce the prevalence of LBW and premature babies
- Reduce the prevalence of congenital birth defects