

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2291
TO BE ANSWERED ON 6TH MAY, 2016**

BIRTH COMPANIONS

**2291. SHRI ADHALRAO PATIL SHIVAJIRAO:
SHRI ANANDRAO ADSUL:
SHRI RAHUL SHEWALE:**

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has allowed/proposes to allow birth companions during delivery in public health facilities to reduce Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has invited suggestions from the public before finalization of such proposal, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the extent to which it is likely to curb MMR and IMR?

**ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA)**

(a) & (b): Government of India has allowed birth companion during delivery in public health facilities.

Birth companions are women who have undergone the process of labour and provide continuous one - to - one support to other women experiencing labour and child birth. The presence of a female relative during labour is a low cost intervention that has proved to be beneficial to the women in labour.

Birth companions provide emotional support (continuous reassurance), information about labour progress and advice regarding coping techniques, comfort measures (comforting touch, massages, promoting adequate fluid intake and output), and advocacy (helping the woman articulate her wishes to the other).

(c): Government of India has done extensive deliberation with the national experts and with the state which are already running the program i.e. Tamilnadu and Gujarat.

The State of Tamil Nadu shared its experience of the birth companion initiative being implemented since 2004 in all the Government hospitals including PHCs. As part of this initiative, a female companion of the pregnant woman is allowed inside the labour room. The presence of a female relative during labor being a low cost intervention has proved to be beneficial to the pregnant women in improving labour outcomes.

Gujarat is the other State where birth companion programme is going on, where a female relative was allowed to be with pregnant women during labor in the labor room.

(d): The World Health Organization promotes labor companionship as a core element of care for improving maternal and infant health (WHO 2002). The regional plan of action for maternal and neonatal health care includes the monitoring of maternal and fetal well-being, and encourages the presence of a companion to provide support during labor and delivery as one of the interventions to improve neonatal health.

Results of the Study titled “Continuous Support For Women During Child Birth” by Hodnett, Simon gates , G Justus Hofmeyr and Carol Sakala shows that Women allocated to continuous support were more likely to have a spontaneous vaginal birth and less likely to have intrapartum analgesia or to report dissatisfaction. In addition, their labors were shorter they were less likely to have a caesarean or instrumental vaginal birth, regional analgesia or a baby with a low five minute Apgar score.