



Amakomaya Nepal



<http://www.amakomaya.com>

Summary

Amakomaya, translated as Mother's Love in Nepali, was initiated by a dedicated team of local ICT experts and health professionals when they received a USD4,000 grant from the Internet Society in 2011. Committed to tackle the challenges that Nepali women face during pregnancy and childbirth; and equipped with the skills to leverage opportunities, including those that the Internet and mobile communications offer, the team is making a series of breakthroughs. Particularly in women's health education, changing community practices that marginalize women, and the digitization of health records.

When Amakomaya started, Internet penetration was a mere 8% in Nepal. But the team was encouraged by the rapid rate of mobile Internet uptake globally, and inspired by local initiatives such as Mahabir Pun's Wireless Networking Project that had provided Internet connectivity to almost 100 remote villages. The Amakomaya team developed a mobile app to deliver audio and video content on maternal health to women in rural areas, giving them access to life-saving information and empowering them to make informed choices about their health. The mobile app also collects vital health data that is sent directly to local government offices when connected to the Internet.

By creating locally relevant content and tools, and demonstrating how the Internet and mobile applications can be used to support pregnant women and healthcare workers in a handful of communities, the Amakomaya team has caught the attention of the Nepali government. The team has been playing a key role in formulating the nation's first e-health strategy, and discussions on scaling up the Amakomaya initiative are underway. The team continues to seek partnerships and support to strengthen their capacity in making Amakomaya a national programme, and in developing new content and mobile apps for local government, health workers, women and their families.

CHALLENGES

1 in 200  **likely to die in pregnancy or child birth in Nepal**

compared with 1 in 3,700 women in developed countries

WHY?

#1 Poor Access

Nepal's rugged terrain and poor infrastructure means that most women in rural areas have to travel by foot to health facilities. Travel time varies from 1 hour to days.

#2 Lack of Awareness

72% of mothers said they did not deliver in a health facility because it was **NOT NECESSARY OR NOT CUSTOMARY**

Pregnancy is taken as a natural process and God's gift, for which any medical care is regarded as unnecessary.

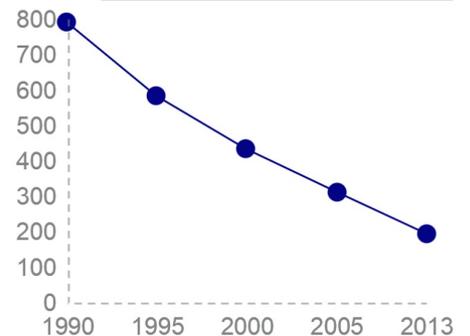
#3 Low Status of Women

 **1 in 3 married women in Nepal do NOT get to decide about their own health care**

The low status of women, engrained in traditional practices, are preventing women from seeking medical care and treatment.

OPPORTUNITIES

With a rigorous health policy, Nepal reduced its maternal mortality ratio by 76% in the period 1990-2013. Only 18 other countries in the world were able to achieve this significant reduction.



■ Maternal Mortality Ratio

Poorest

11%

Rural

32%

Urban

73%

Richest

82%

Yet, there is great disparity between urban and rural areas, and between the rich and poor, as shown.

Percentage of deliveries assisted by skilled birth attendants

50,000 FCHVs

As part of Nepal's health policy, female community health volunteers (FCHVs) were mobilized. These volunteers come from, and live in the the communities they serve, and are critical in promoting maternal and child health.

ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACTS

Reached

11 Communities

1,077 

Equipped
& Trained

90 FCHVs

Smartphones were given to the FCHVs, and they were trained to use the Amakomaya mobile app.

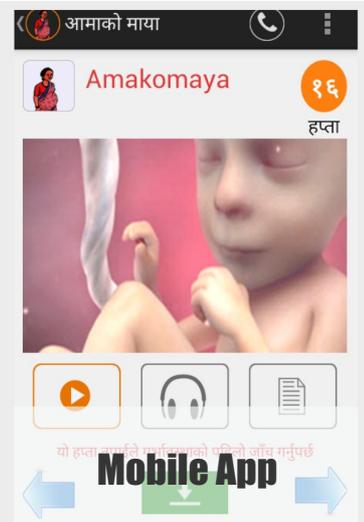


#1 Convince women to make the antenatal visits

Before Amakomaya, there were about 15 pregnant women going for their antenatal visit at the health post, but once we showed the Amakomaya videos to the pregnant women on the mobile phones, the health post reported 39 antenatal visits. That is more than double the previous number.

~ Suman Aryal, Jhuwani Community Library

Amakomaya is a partnership with government and civil society. The Jhuwani Community Library is one of Amakomaya's partners, training FCHVs to use the mobile app, and raising women's awareness about maternal health issues in Bachhauli, Chitwan district.



#2 Provide local government access to digitized health information

Amakomaya is following the data standard of the Nepal Government Health Management Information System. For the first time, local government is receiving digitized information from the health facilities through the Amakomaya app, which can be sent directly to the national government. Although some of the health facilities lost all their paper records in the recent Gorkha Earthquake, data saved in the Amakomaya server were recovered.

#3 Promote conversations about pregnancy between spouses and family members



As women are often isolated because of their low status, the support of family members is critical for pregnant women to get the antenatal care and safe delivery that they need. Improving maternal health is not only about improving the health system and focusing on pregnant women. Some of the Amakomaya content in the mobile app are intended to involve husbands, parent-in-laws and other family members during the pregnancy period.

~ Rajendra Prasad Poudel, Founder and Executive Director of Amakomaya

#4 Empower women with pregnancy-related content anytime, anywhere

The Android mobile app provides local content related to maternal and child health in video, audio and text formats, developed in partnership with government and civil society.

Although there are many programmes on radio and TV, I have no time for them because of my daily household works. With the Amakomaya app I can watch the informative content at my leisure time.

~ Parvati Gurung, Dandagaun, Rasuwa



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Internet Society Asia-Pacific Bureau, 9 Temasek Boulevard, Suntec Tower Two #09-01, Singapore 038989

SOURCES: Interviews with the Amakomaya team and partners - Rajendra Prasad Poudel, Sudarshan Paudel, Sujana Manandhar, Ambika Timila and Suman Aryal; <http://amakomaya.com>; <http://data.unicef.org>; <http://data.worldbank.org>; Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011; <http://statcompiler.com>; Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013. Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division.

