



Options in Nepal

What we do

We are proud of our 25-year partnership with the Government of Nepal to build stronger health systems that work for everyone. Over this period, our support has expanded from a focus on ensuring safe motherhood, to strengthening all areas of the health system. As a trusted partner to the Ministry of Health and Population, we provide embedded technical assistance (TA) to federal and sub-national governments.

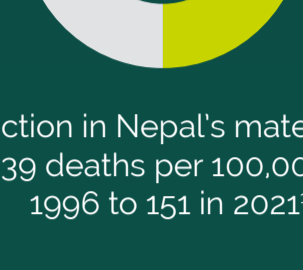
Our focus is on:

- **Strengthening health system resilience** by building the capacity of federal and local governments to respond to political change and health emergencies.
- **Institutionalising gender equality and social inclusion** to achieve sustained improvements in systems and services for vulnerable populations, including the poor, people with disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged because of gender.
- **Increasing the quality of reproductive, maternal and newborn care** by supporting the development of policies such as the National Health Policy and Nepal Health Sector Strategic Plan 2030, and improving clinical practice by developing protocols and institutionalising mentorship.
- **Promoting health sector accountability** by ensuring the government and key stakeholders have access to and use quality evidence for policy, planning and budgeting decisions. We also strengthen public financial management to deliver the best health impact with limited resources.
- **Understanding who holds power and incentives for health systems reform**, through process and power mapping, so that technical decisions in our programming translate to real world practice.

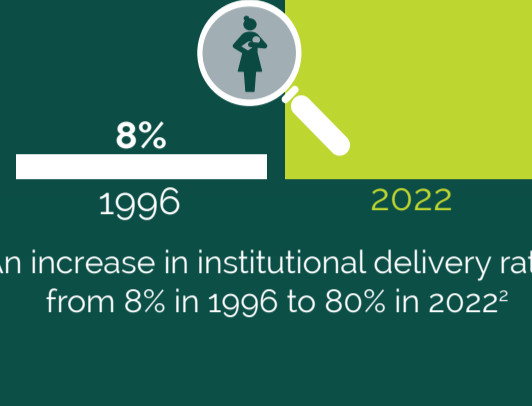
Our Impact

Improving maternal and newborn health

We have worked side-by-side with the government to achieve ambitious national targets. Starting with our support to the safe motherhood programme in 1997, we have contributed to improving access to facility-births and life-saving caesarean sections for women facing obstetric emergencies, and improved the quality of health services for newborns, adolescents, and women. This is reflected in the national statistics, which record:



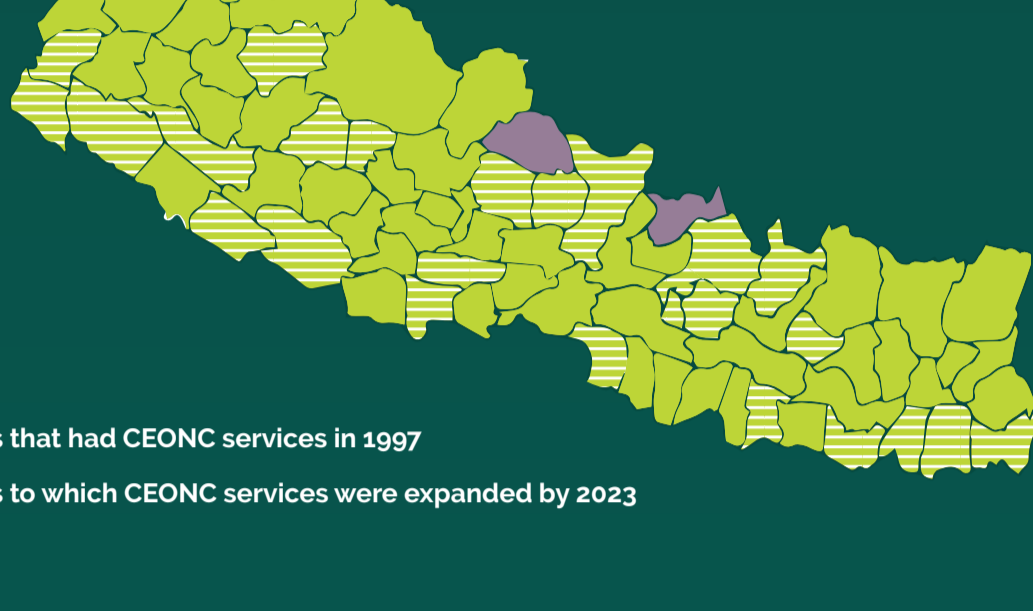
A 70% reduction in Nepal's maternal mortality ratio from 539 deaths per 100,000 livebirths in 1996 to 151 in 2021¹



An increase in institutional delivery rates from 8% in 1996 to 80% in 2022²

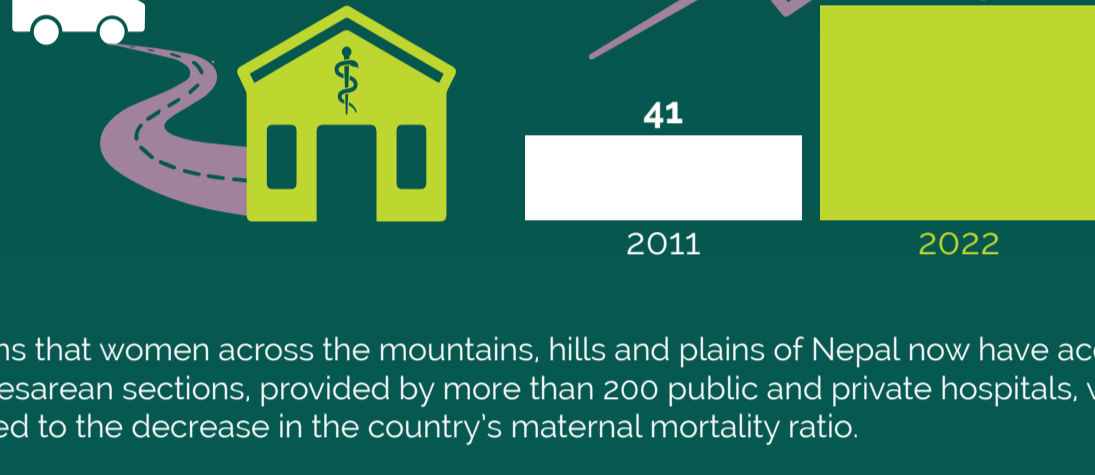
Our contribution to making comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care (CEONC) services accessible, equitable and functional has increased:

CEONC services expanded from 30% of all districts in 1997 to 97% in 2023



● Districts that had CEONC services in 1997
● Districts to which CEONC services were expanded by 2023

The number of public CEONC hospitals increased from 41 in 2011 to 104 in 2022



This means that women across the mountains, hills and plains of Nepal now have access to life saving caesarean sections, provided by more than 200 public and private hospitals, which has contributed to the decrease in the country's maternal mortality ratio.

Strengthening health system resilience during political change and health emergencies

Between 2010 and 2022, we supported the government to respond to a complex and evolving political environment, the 2015 earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health sector transition to federalism

Since Nepal's constitutional change to a federal system in 2015, we have helped the country's health sector reform by:

- **Supporting the government** to draft policies, regulations and new roles and functions for a devolved health sector.
- **Generating evidence** on how devolution has worked in practice for feedback and course correction.
- **Strengthening local level health systems** and their capacity to deliver basic health services by facilitating and supporting planning, training, and service readiness assessments.

Supporting health sector recovery after the earthquakes

Following the earthquakes in Nepal in 2015, we worked with the government to rebuild its health system to provide health services and support to affected people, this included:

- **Restoring 851 health facilities** to provide shock-proof and essential health services in 14 earthquake affected districts.
- **The seismic and functional retrofitting of two flagship hospitals** in Bhaktapur and Pokhara.
- **Designing hospitals and health facilities** that integrate multi-hazard and climate resilience structures that can withstand earthquakes of high magnitude.
- **Development of standards for health infrastructure** and multi-hazard resilient designs for public health facilities that have become the benchmark at national, provincial, and local levels.

Supporting Nepal's COVID-19 response

We helped improve the country's vaccine rollout during the pandemic by:

- **Supporting the Ministry of Health and Population** with policy development, procurement, and information management processes as well as continuity of essential maternal and newborn health care, family planning, safe abortion and gender-based violence services.
- **Providing technical assistance** for emergency procurement and supply as well as financial management during the crisis.
- **Increased capacity to treat COVID-19 patients** by transforming temporary hospital building spaces into COVID-19 wards.
- **Analysing daily infections reports** and vaccine uptake data to help COVID-19 monitoring and national vaccination rollout.

Making health equity central to policy, governance and services

Strengthening health sector governance and accountability

We have enhanced health data systems, resulting in major improvements of the reliability and accessibility of data for key health sector stakeholders. This has supported responsiveness and strengthened accountability, leading to:



The number of health facilities reporting disaggregated data to the Health Management Information System (HMIS) increasing from 23% in 2017 to over 68% in 2022, supporting equitable planning.



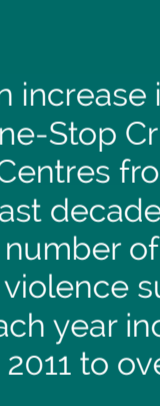
The development of a national Health Infrastructure Information System, which details the geo-locations of facilities and has vastly improved planning and decision-making on setting-up new or strengthening existing health facilities.



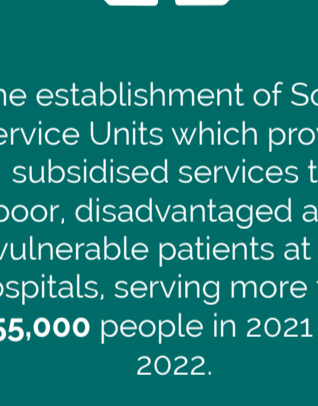
Contributing to equitable access to health services for women by supporting the government to explore the use of medical drones to deliver emergency and life-saving medicines to those living in remote mountain areas of Nepal.

Institutionalising gender equality and social inclusion

We have prioritised gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and financially supportive programming which has led to:



An increase in hospital-based One-Stop Crisis Management Centres from 7 to 88 in the last decade. As a result, the number of gender-based violence survivors served each year increased from 187 in 2011 to over 13,000 in 2022.


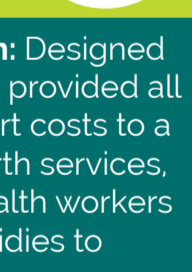









The establishment of Service Units which provide subsidised services to poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable patients at 58 hospitals, serving more than 255,000 people in 2021 and 2022.



Mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion into national health sector budgeting and planning processes by developing gender responsive budgeting guidelines.

Our achievements

 <p>2004</p> <p>Emergency obstetric care: Completed one of Nepal's first large-scale projects focussing on improving women's access to emergency obstetric care.</p>	 <p>2006</p> <p>Financing for maternal health: Designed and introduced a scheme that provided all pregnant women with transport costs to a health facility and free childbirth services, and provided incentives to health workers attending deliveries, and subsidies to facilities.</p>
 <p>2011</p> <p>Gender-based violence: Introduced One Stop Crisis Management Centres as a health systems response to tackle gender-based violence.</p>	 <p>2015</p> <p>Health infrastructure earthquake response: Supported the restoration of essential health services at 850 facilities in 14 earthquake-affected districts and embarked on the first seismic retrofitting project of hospitals with the government.</p>
 <p>2018</p> <p>Transition to federalism: Supported the government's health sector devolution by undertaking a stock-take of health sector policies and analysis of constitutional responsibilities of each level of government to identify inconsistencies and improve policy coherence across all levels.</p>	 <p>2020</p> <p>COVID-19 response: Enabled the continuity of essential healthcare services during the pandemic by developing interim guidelines to deliver maternal and newborn health care, family planning and safe abortion services.</p>
 <p>2021</p> <p>Nursing and midwifery: Facilitated the development of Nepal's Nursing and Midwifery Strategy (2020-2030) to improve professional training and development, and drafted the Safe Motherhood and Newborn Health Roadmap 2030.</p>	 <p>2022</p> <p>Functionality and integration of HMIS: Improved data quality and use of the HMIS, leading to an increase in on-time reporting from 25% to 75% in the last five years.</p>
 <p>2022</p> <p>Health Sector Strategic Plan to 2030: Conducted a health systems analysis to examine performance, challenges, and progress at provincial and local levels of government since the country's devolution to inform and develop Nepal's new health sector strategy.</p>	

Our commitment

We are committed to working with the Nepal government and partners to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage through a responsive, holistic approach that supports the country's efforts to devolve its health system and transition away from aid. We continue to contribute towards building resilient and equitable systems by leveraging transformative innovations at scale, working collaboratively with partners, and enhancing citizen participation and accountability mechanisms.

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Options Consultancy Services is a global team of experts and innovators tackling some of the world's most pressing health challenges. Over the last 30 years, we have worked in more than 50 countries to provide ideas, advice and technical know-how that enable our partners to build a path to lasting change. We are a health systems organisation that understands reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health service delivery. We lead emerging work on the sustainable use of renewable energy in health, shock resilient and climate sensitive infrastructure, and reducing the health system's own direct carbon footprint to build a greener future.

Footnotes:
¹National Population and Housing Census 2021: Nepal Maternal Mortality Study 2021
²National Population and Housing Census 2021: Nepal Maternal Mortality Study 2021.