

Two Indian ladies hugging and laughing, one is holding a mobile phone

MOBILE ACADEMY

2013 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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EDUCATING HEALTH WORKERS VIA THEIR MOBILE PHONES.

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Project URL: ananya.org.in/tools/106-mobile-academy

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Healthcare for the 100 million people living in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India, depends on a guerrilla army of more than 200,000 community health workers, trekking from village to village. One of the main challenges is to train this dispersed workforce to keep them abreast of good practice. Community health workers are invariably keen to learn, dedicated to their jobs, and in Bihar many are willing to pay small sums out of their own pocket to improve their skills. Yet bringing them together for classes is expensive and impractical. Few have access to computers, televisions or radio for traditional distance-learning classes.

Mobile Academy is an ambitious attempt to overcome these problems using mobile phones. It creates a structured learning programme for tens of thousands of health workers to educate themselves about life-saving information on maternal and child health through a simple voice call from their mobile phones. If it is successful it could provide a new model for other health services that combines a distributed, local workforce of para-professionals with access to constant on-the-job training to upgrade their skills.

In the first year of the programme, launched in May 2012, more than 27,000 community health workers signed up for the course, and 8,000 have completed all the modules, at a minimal cost of just over Rs.100.

The plan is to roll out the Mobile Academy in other northern Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. It was created by BBC Media Action, the development arm of the BBC, and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates

Foundation in partnership with the government of Bihar and Indian telecoms operators.

Image 'The unmet need of family planning' courtesy of Gates Foundation

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