

### 4.3.2 Project SAKHI

#### ROLE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH VOLUNTEERS IN SCREENING AND FOLLOW UP FOR SAFE ABORTION CARE: SAKHI RESEARCH TRIAL

**Context:** Despite being legally available in India since 1971, unsafe abortion continues to be a problem. The role of CHWs as the facilitators to enable access to safe abortion is relatively unexplored. World Health Organization in collaboration with the ARTH society took up a qualitative study to understand and explore the use of CHWs as the facilitators for extending safe abortion services to rural women in Rajasthan.

**Validation Study:** The study was aimed at ascertaining if the qualified and trained CHWs could accurately identify (a) women eligible for medical abortion and (b) women who need follow up care post medical abortion.

#### **Training of community health volunteers:**

**One week** of training consisting of **three days** of classroom instruction and **three days** of practicum was conducted for the volunteers (VHWs/ASHAs).

Research staff like Data Managers, Research Associates and Research Assistants were also trained on the same.

As part of the main study, women seeking abortion at the identified health centers were assessed by a CHW and a clinician. The eligibility toolkit included a calendar, a pregnancy test kit, a gestational age-wheel and a checklist of contraindications to medical abortions in Hindi.

The sample included a total of **352** women.

**Results: Overall the study showed** a moderate to high level of agreement between the CHWs and the clinicians in assessment of eligibility depending on the CHW's level of education and prior experience.

**Qualitative Study: 24 women** who were seeking advice on early medical abortions or presenting for a routine follow-up visit were interviewed. A total of **ten qualified CHWs** were interviewed as well.

The findings of the study suggested that CHWs were willing to be a part of the entire mechanism provided that they were given appropriate trainings, regular supplies of the tool kits and the necessary job aids.

Women had apprehensions about contacting the CHWs for the specified service because they apprehended the breach of confidentiality and the possibility of pressure to undergo sterilization.

The study concluded that great potential still remained untapped in using CHWs for making accessible the information and services regarding safe medical abortion while addressing the women's concerns about approaching the CHWs.