

# "They Know Everything": the Role of Community Health Workers in Abortion Access

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Community health workers (CHWs) are community members trained in health promotion and basic services, but are not considered healthcare professionals. As the key interface between public health systems and rural communities in many low- and middle-income countries, they play a

In India, female CHWs provide information on maternal and new born health, including contraceptive advice. Equipped

to them for advice and support in their abortion decision-

abortion, can influence abortion decisions and pathways, including how safe they are.

Field research in rural Indian communities reveals that CHWs can enable or prevent abortion access based on the advice or support provided. They also display some stigmatising attitudes towards abortion including negative stereotypes and moral qualms, which can affect the quality and nature of their advice. For example, some CHWs accompany women to trusted providers and keep their abortion secret, while others

In contexts where abortion is legal, recognising CHWs as pivotal actors in abortion care and investing in their training can make safe abortion more accessible. By providing accurate information and identifying safe providers, CHWs

reduce their risk of death or injury.