Helping mothers and babies survive childbirth in Ethiopia

Background

Although Ethiopian health authorities have made great strides in reducing high levels of childbirth mortality, as many as 9,000 mothers and 90,000 babies still die each year for reasons medically simple to overcome.

In keeping with key Millennium Development Goals, Ethiopia has invested heavily in reducing needlessly tragic outcomes for both delivering mothers and their newborns.

The resulting huge expansion in both training institutions and healthcare students has created an opportunity for Canadian doctors, midwives and other professionals to help by enhancing the capacities of perinatal practitioners, teachers and facilities.

Our project - conceived by University of Alberta faculty, funded by the Government of Canada and made possible by the support of key Ethiopian and Canadian partners - has seized that opportunity.

Project goals

Our aim:
To significantly reduce maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity in Ethiopia by ensuring safe delivery and newborn survival from community to referral hospital.

Our strategies:
1. **Quality training:** Increased access to and utilization of skilled birth attendants.
2. **Quality systems:** Increased co-ordination of the regional referral system.
3. **Quality institutions:** An enhanced institutional environment to support sustainable, equitable and gender-sensitive MNCH services.

Project undertaken with the financial support of:
- **Global Affairs Canada**
- **Affaires mondiales Canada**

For more information or to receive our newsletter:
Email: etmnch@ualberta.ca
Website: www.med.ualberta.ca/communities/globalhealth/projects/ethiopia-mnch
Canada: 2-115 Edmonton Clinic Health Academy, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB Canada T6G 1C9
Edmonton office phone: +1-780-492-8928
Ethiopia office phone: +251-112-732401

February 2016
1. Quality Training

Senior Midwife Tutor Training Program

The curriculum for our Senior Midwife Tutor Training Program (SMTTP) was developed and implemented by midwifery and nursing professors at our major partner, Mount Royal University in Calgary. It is a four-month cycle of instruction, clinical refreshers and work in home communities designed to bolster the capacity of midwife educators from health centres and colleges in all regions of Ethiopia.

The course begins and ends with classroom work focussing on both pedagogical and clinical skills, but places high priority on putting new skills into practice, and having students share them with institutional colleagues, midwifery students and community midwives.

In the first two years starting in February 2014, instructors from Mount Royal and University of Alberta carried the lion’s share of the teaching, but in keeping with the goal of long-term sustainability, talented, skilled Ethiopian colleagues are gradually taking over at the front of the classroom.

Mount Royal University Prof. Patricia Pryma spent three days in November preparing six Ethiopian midwives to begin taking over SMTTP teaching as part of the project’s key sustainability objective. With Pryma (third from left) are Tamir Birhanu, Etagegn Gemechu, Genet Atilabachew, Dereje Mengistie, Mehret Abate and Asegedech Befikadu.

2. Quality Systems

Strengthening Referral Procedures

In November, 25 health professionals from Fiche Zone northwest of Addis Ababa gathered for a two-day training session in a Quality Improvement process developed by the University of Alberta project team.

This aspect of the project supports and helps build the capacity of healthcare workers, administrators and facilities.

We use an innovative simulation-based workshop to train quality improvement teams of dedicated health care workers on how to achieve and maintain high-level care.

The goal is the creation of feasible plans that can be implemented by front-line workers using realistic budgets. Each target outcome must be measurable; the first success leads to a second and third as the collaborative cycle is repeated.

Several courses have been held in both rural and urban settings for both hospitals and health centres.

With the development of effective local QI teams, we anticipate a significant reduction in neonatal mortality and morbidity from the uptake in routine practices as simple as use of skin-to-skin care, hats and warmers.

3. Quality Institutions

Building capacity at St. Paul’s Hospital

MicroResearch

A course developed by colleagues at Dalhousie University is aimed at improving local research capacity.

By the end of a two-week workshop, teams of participants have formed to develop and submit formal grant applications for ethics and funding consideration.

Nineteen MicroResearch projects are currently under way.

Helping Babies Survive, Helping Mothers Survive and Other Courses

The project has given Helping Babies Breathe training to dozens of facilitators and providers who have taken their skills to the far reaches of Ethiopia.

In 2016 we will institute similar training with the new Helping Babies Survive and Helping Mothers Survive programs.

The Project will also give Basic Emergency Obstetric Care training to delivery professionals in urban and rural facilities.

University of Alberta neonatologist and project associate director Dr. Khalid Aziz conducts a Helping Babies Breathe workshop at St. Paul’s in Addis Ababa.