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John Snow, Inc.

Integrated Family Health Program

SAVING MATERNAL AND NEWBORN LIVES IN ETHIOPIA

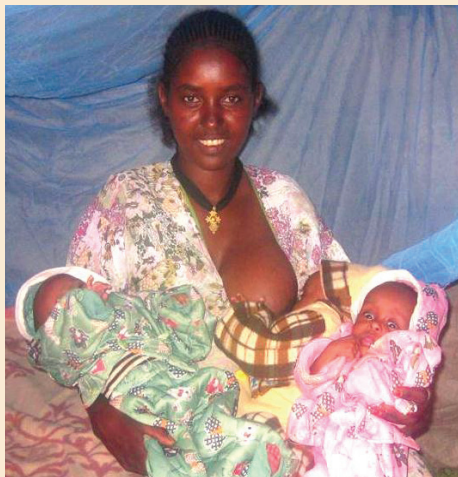


Only about 10 percent of births in Ethiopia are delivered by skilled attendants, and more than 10 percent of children die before their fifth birthday. While mortality rates have improved in recent years, there is still much to be done to save mother's and children's lives. The Ethiopia Integrated Family Health Program (IFHP) is focused on proven interventions that save lives.

The Integrated Family Health Program, in partnership with the Ethiopian Ministry of Health and funder USAID, implements a comprehensive family health package to increase awareness of critical maternal and child health behaviors and trains health providers and volunteers in evidence-based approaches to community health.

IFHP conducts sensitization meetings with community members and influential people in order to raise awareness of health risks faced by women and newborns and to help each community identify the problems confronting them. The community then develops local solutions to solve some of the problems identified. IFHP helps community members recognize the risks inherent in labor and childbirth and the benefits of delivering at a health facility with trained providers. Or having a community savings fund available for women who require emergency services, such as an ambulance—or locally made stretchers—to take them to a health facility.

Improving Birth Outcomes



Letemichael Kidane safely delivered her triplets in a hospital after being persuaded by her trained HEW that it was for the best.

Telling our stories...

During her last pregnancy, **Letemichael Kidane** had four antenatal visits with her local Health Extension Worker (HEW) in her kebele in Adwa, Tigray Region. She also saw another health professional in a health center in Adwa. At that facility, they determined that she was pregnant with triplets and that she would need special care when the labor started.

Letemichael's family was divided on whether to follow the family's tradition of delivering at home or in a health facility assisted by skilled health professionals. After

several conversations with the HEW, they finally agreed to let her deliver in the facility. When the time came, she was transported to Adwa Hospital in the *woreda* ambulance.

Her expenses were covered by a community savings fund. Letemichael is now safe at home after giving birth to healthy triplets at Adwa Hospital. Following her successful experience, Letemichael compared delivering at home and at a health facility. "Home deliveries are not assisted by skilled professionals. All that you hear is 'push, push now...' and so on. The health center and the hospital are clean and comfortable. The midwives are caring and helpful. Health professionals saved my life and my babies' lives," said the proud mother.

Berekti, another client from Adwa, was preparing to deliver her baby at home as was the practice with her family. She has learned, however, about the importance of antenatal visits to the health post. After attending four antenatal visits at the health post, accompanied by her mother, Berekti became aware of the risks related to pregnancy and wondered whether to follow her HEWs' recommendation to deliver at the health center. When Berekti was assured that her mother could



accompany her during labor and delivery, she made her decision to go to the health center.

When asked about her experience delivering at the health center, Berekti said, "The delivery room was clean. The midwives were supportive, and I was allowed to deliver in a squatting position. I felt free to express my feelings and to pray. My mother was with me the entire time. My family waiting outside were entertained with tea and coffee. After I had my baby, the health center provided me with a hat and socks for my baby. My experience was totally different from the rumors I heard about delivering in a health center. I will definitely recommend to my fellow community members to deliver in a health center."

Dawud Bekele learned about antenatal and delivery services during one of the community meetings in her kebele in Burkitu Halkessa Kebele. Her first three children were delivered at home in the traditional way. During this pregnancy, Dawud had four antenatal visits at the health post and there the HEWs advised her to deliver in a health facility. She accepted their advice and delivered her baby with the help of the HEWs at the health post. After she delivered her baby, Dawud received counseling about the choice of family planning methods and she chose Depo-Provera. Dawud is spreading the news to her neighbors and friends that it is good to deliver in a health facility assisted by professionals.

Increasing mother's and families satisfaction with maternal and newborn health services.



1. Woreda health officers support IFHP's efforts and promote community sensitization and creating women-friendly health facilities. Here, trained midwives are with Ato Mulugeta (R), head of the Ahferom Woreda Health Office **2.** The extensive training of midwives in BEMONC, by IFHP has improved the quality of childbirth services in facilities. **3.** IFHP has helped equip delivery rooms, such as this one in Sagure Health Center, Oromia.



Tsige Alemu (L) received appropriate antenatal services from her Health Extension Worker Leeshan Lemma.

Tsige Alemu lives in Degelu Techo Woreda in Assela Zone. She is six months pregnant and during her previous pregnancies, Tsige would go for traditional treatments such as abdominal massage. After HEWs visited her home, she learned about antenatal and delivery services and learned that the massages were potentially harmful to her baby. She decided to get antenatal services from the trained health profes-

sionals. At the antenatal visits she received iron folate and TT2 vaccination in addition to counseling about proper nutrition. Tsige has accepted the HEWs' advice that it is best to deliver her baby assisted by a skilled birth attendants. She said, "I will continue to attend the antenatal visits at the health post. When it is time to deliver my baby, I will go to the health center to get the help of the midwives."

"Our motto is that all mothers must be assisted by skilled birth attendants and we'll do everything in our power to make that happen."

— Ayelech Getachew

IFHP promotes a comprehensive approach to maternal and newborn health services, coordinating with the public health system to sensitize communities about MNH-related problem and possible solutions that meet communities' needs. To ensure that health workers are trained in the latest approaches, IFHP trains Health Extension Workers (HEWs) in antenatal care, birth preparedness, danger signs, essential newborn care and newborn resuscitations, postnatal care, infection prevention, and healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy. IFHP also trains health professionals and midwives in basic emergency obstetrics and newborn care, PMTCT, and postpartum family planning and including quality assurance. Finally, IFHP strives to maintain the continuum of care from the community up to the health facility level by strengthening the link between health centers and health posts, under an initiative launched by the government of Ethiopia, called the Primary Health Care Unit.



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4. Ayelech Getachew, Director of the Buge health Center in SNNPR. 5. Communities develop local solutions, such as this locally made stretcher, to transport women to facilities. 6. Volunteer Community Health promoters play a significant role in informing their fellow community members about maternal health services and the importance of facility-based skilled birth attendance.

Training Health Workers

IFHP conducts trainings in maternal and newborn health for health professionals, with a particular emphasis on Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (BEmONC), prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), postpartum family planning and quality of care. A midwife nurse in Tigray who was trained in BEmONC by IFHP said, “The most important benefit we got from the BEmONC training is that we are now able to identify pregnancy complications that require referral to a hospital, while we can attend at the health center most complications. Recently we identified three pre-eclampsia cases and referred them to the woreda hospital resulting in the women getting the necessary care and attention. All three of

them delivered their babies safely. Before the training, we were not able to identify such cases.”

Ayelech Getachew, the Director of Buge Health Center in Wolayita Zone (SNNPR), said that the health center is now able to provide a quality delivery service now that midwives have been trained and supplies stocked. Community sensitization for institutional delivery along with quality service at the facility has resulted in many more women delivering at the health center; the numbers have more than doubled in the past six months. Ayelech added, “Our motto is that all mothers must be assisted by skilled birth attendants and we’ll do everything in our power to make that happen.”



Buge Health Center professionals trained in BEmONC



IFHP Intervention

IFHP’s framework for a comprehensive approach to MNH interventions emphasizes strengthening the primary health care unit (PHCU) for smooth implementation of services and to ensure a continuum of care that ranges from the community to the hospital level. JSI has identified eight strategic steps for a comprehensive MNH and IFHP has targeted 100 health centers as program learning sites. Lessons learned from these facilities will be used to determine the best approach for further scale up of the initiative.

John Snow, Inc. (JSI) is dedicated to improving the health of mothers and newborns around the world. With over 30 years of experience, JSI brings practical approaches to address maternal and newborn health (MNH) challenges by building partnership among governments, non-governmental organizations and communities. JSI works within the framework of the primary health care unit to increase demand for and availability of an integrated package of high impact health services for Ethiopian women, children and families.

The Integrated Family Health Program is implemented by Pathfinder International and John Snow, Inc. in partnership with the Consortium of Health Associations. IFHP is one of many assistance projects made possible by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



John Snow, Inc.

Maternal & Newborn Health Core Strategic Steps

Step 1: Build buy-in at woreda level: Present the strategy and package of interventions at Woreda Health Offices to ensure ownership of the program.

Step 2: Strengthen human resources for MNH at health centers: Train health center health professionals in BEmONC, PMTCT, and postpartum family planning—including quality assurance.

Step 3: Ensure essential MNH commodities: Ensure medical equipment, drugs, as well as clinical protocols and guidelines are available at health centers.

Step 4: Community sensitization at woreda and kebele levels. Bring together community leaders, local health administrators, and health providers to identify barriers that may prevent women and families from accessing skilled birth attendance and suggest solutions to bridge those gaps.

Step 5: Strengthen HEW capacity to deliver MCH services: Train and mentor HEWs in antenatal care, birth preparedness, danger signs, essential newborn care and newborn resuscitations, postnatal care, infection prevention, and healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy.

Step 6: Formalize and strengthen linkages between health posts and health centers to ensure the continuum of care at Primary Health Care Units and to improve the referral system.

Step 7: Synchronize behavior change activities and demand creation with availability of MNH services: Implement behavior change activities only when there are trained providers and facilities have necessary supplies on hand.

Step 8: Monitor progress and provide continuous support for MNH by strengthening the availability and adequate use of information at all levels of the health system.

The Integrated Family Health Program (IFHP) is a bilateral component of USAID’s Family Health Program in Ethiopia implemented jointly by John Snow, Inc. and Pathfinder International in partnership with Consortium of Reproductive Health Associations. Our results achieved in various activities—including nutrition, child health, and family planning—show that a lasting impact can be attained in the reduction of morbidity and mortality in Ethiopia only by combining the demand creation effort with the offer of quality health services.