

Improving the Quality of Maternal and Newborn Health Service Delivery in Myanmar



Master Mentors from CWH demonstrate best practices of Normal Labor and Delivery to House Officers

Committed to strengthening maternal and newborn health in the country, the government of Myanmar has engaged a powerhouse of partners to advance the education, training, and practice of health care providers in order to prevent the needless deaths of women and newborns. The General Electric (GE) Foundation, Merck for Mothers, The Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG) and the U.S. Agency for International Development's flagship Maternal and Child Survival Program (MCSP), led by Jhpiego, are working side by side with leaders in maternal and newborn health in Myanmar to deploy innovative strategies and affirm best practices for a revitalized focus on maternal and newborn health.

While the deaths of women and newborns have declined over the past 20 years, Myanmar, also known as Burma, aspires to health outcomes for mothers and babies that rival other countries in the region. Through the government's leadership, public and private partners are focused on initiatives aligned to prevent the deaths of mothers and babies.

Under a four-year project funded by the GE Foundation, Jhpiego is introducing a quality improvement and competency-based in-service capacity building at Central Women's Hospital in Yangon and two referral hospitals. The GE Foundation-supported work has led to a wealth of evidence-based, standard-driven processes and tools for strengthening health care. This is paying dividends for patients and providers alike.

Daw Khin Nilar Win, a mid-level nursing leader said, "Thanks to Jhpiego's training program, supported by GE, standardization comes into practice. No step is left out because every step has to be carried out systematically according to the checklist. It is quite convenient to perform with enough supplies with exact methods -- infection prevention becomes better. Owing to the training, patients get more health benefits by preventing the transmission of diseases and improving the safety of maternal and newborn health (MNH) care providers."

Key Statistics:

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| Maternal mortality..... | 282 per 100,000 live births |
| Live births attended by a skilled birth attendant... | 57% |
| Infant mortality rate..... | 62 per 1000 live births |

UNICEF; Myanmar National Census 2014

The GE Foundation investment has also catalyzed changes in other areas of the health care system by providing critical, high impact approaches that have been scaled up over the past two years, benefitting a range of in-service providers and pre-service midwifery students across the country. This constellation of reforms has been led by the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) and supported by other key partners.

"Jhpiego capacity building programs funded by GE Foundation are highly beneficial for us to share with other health care providers. As a result, we are now confidently providing the quality MNH services according to the standardized methods and procedures, introduced by Jhpiego. Obviously, infection prevention measures (with the introducing of quality improvement approach) of our hospital are improving (daily). Those who have attended technical update sessions funded by the GE project can perform according to the standardized methods but new staffs and students need to be trained regularly."

Daw Hnin Htet Htet Aung, a Master Mentor/Trained Nurse from the Central Women's Hospital in Yangon

Through the GE Foundation-funded project, learning resource materials and training approaches were adapted to the Myanmar context and tested for effective use in the country. These included clinical skills standardization for in-service training, clinical teaching skills development and use of a "Master Mentor" and a "Low Dose High Frequency" approach to delivering on-going capacity building. In part because of successful implementation of these approaches at Central Women's Hospital, the MOHS invited Jhpiego to provide technical support in designing a plan to strengthen basic emergency obstetric and newborn care nationally. This national level support is funded by the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG). The Jhpiego 3MDG program also provides midwifery workforce development support across the spectrum of pre-service education, regulation and in-service training. Jhpiego worked with the MOHS to adapt the training approaches and materials developed with support from the GE Foundation, for the 3MDG program. The training that uses these materials, and leverages the approaches that were initially tested at Central Women's Hospital, is now being rolled out to many

thousands of midwives and other providers across the country.

"When I first learned about [the LDHF] approach, I realized that it was totally different from our traditional training approach," said Professor Mya Thida, current President of Myanmar's Obstetrical & Gynecological Society, who was the head of the obstetrics and gynecology department at CWH in 2013 when Jhpiego first proposed the approach. "And so I agreed to test this in my hospital".

In addition, through a Jhpiego-led project funded by Merck for Mothers, the GE Foundation-supported training materials and training approaches, learning resource materials and tools were also adapted for use by the Kayin State Health Department for in-service capacity building activities, and rolled out in this remote corner of the country to improve maternal and newborn health.

"I would say this is the most inclusive and integrated [capacity-building] approach of all time in Myanmar."

Dr. Theingi Myint, former Director of Maternal and Reproductive Health, Ministry of Health

Finally, one of the lynch pins of the GE Foundation-funded project -- a standards-based quality improvement approach piloted in Myanmar for the first time -- is about to be scaled up to five state-level tertiary hospitals in different states of the country through USAID's Maternal and Child Survival Program, which is providing policy, human resources for health and service delivery strengthening support to strengthen maternal, newborn and child health in Myanmar. These five facilities are being prepared to serve as clinical practice sites for state/regional skills centers. These centers are designed as model clinical sites using the quality improvement approach and tools initially introduced through the GE Foundation-funded project. Through these centers, all in-service MNH health care providers in the regions will be able to learn maternal and newborn health-related best practices. This same quality improvement concept has also been adapted for use at 22 clinical sites affiliated to midwifery training institutions to prepare them as model clinical sites where aspiring midwives can learn best practices hands-on, through the education-strengthening project funded by 3MDG.

Through the GE foundation-funded project, a number of new initiatives such as quality improvement approaches and tools and in-service capacity building models have been introduced in Myanmar. These initiatives are complementary to the MOHS' priority of improving the quality of MNH services and are being adopted nationally. The replicable and scalable program approaches, that have been recognized and adopted by the MOHS, have also attracted investments from other partners for MOHS-led roll outs. Based on these achievements, this private sector investment from the GE Foundation has successfully demonstrated the catalytic and value-added effect of public-private partnership between the health ministry, private sector and international non-governmental organizations.