



THE MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH THEMATIC FUND

Case Studies on
Strengthening Midwifery
Services to Avert
Maternal and Newborn
Deaths



Ensuring rights and choices for all since 1969





BANGLADESH

A new cadre of professional midwives is successfully meeting the needs of women, newborns and families.

Maternal deaths in Bangladesh fell nearly 61 per cent between 2000 and 2014.¹ Though such progress is encouraging in this densely populated country, each year, 176 women still die per 100,000 live births.¹ Only about 42 per cent of women give birth under the care of a skilled attendant.²

Since 2010, the Maternal Health Thematic Fund (MHTF) has supported the Government of Bangladesh in its pledge to train an additional 3,000 midwives and double the share of births attended by a skilled health professional. Bangladesh has launched two new midwifery programmes: a six-month certificate in midwifery for nurse-midwives and a three-year, direct-entry midwifery diploma programme.

Midwifery successes backed by the MHTF have been leveraged to attract additional funding, garner enhanced public policy commitments and engage all relevant stakeholders. The results: significant improvements in maternal and newborn health, and declines in mortality and morbidity.

Key Implementation Strategies



Education

In 2013, the MHTF supported the launch of a three-year, direct-entry diploma midwifery programme, starting with a yearly intake of 525 students. The number has gradually increased to 1,625 across 54 public and private midwifery schools that meet all standards of the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and the World Health Organization (WHO). In 2016, members of the first class were licensed. That same year, 1,200 midwives certified under the a six-month post-basic course were successfully deployed to health facilities across the country. Currently, there are 1,600 certified midwives and 1,883 midwives with a three-year diploma. The first batch of 600 diploma midwives was deployed in July 2018. To strengthen clinical skills, UNFPA has sponsored over 1,500 midwifery graduate internships at 110 sub-district hospitals. During their internship, Interns have delivered over 13,757 babies and provided 30,000 women with family planning methods. To build the capacity of midwifery faculty members, 90 faculty from 38 institutes enrolled in a two-year master's programme on sexual and reproductive health through Dalarna University in Sweden. To date, UNFPA has supported over 38 midwifery education institutions with teaching and learning aids across Bangladesh.

MHTF Activity Timeline

- Direct-entry diploma programme planned.
- Started development of midwifery curriculum.
- Teaching materials, models and textbooks procured, and nursing educational programmes expanded to include midwifery.
- Bangladesh Midwifery Society formed.
- 525 students enter the midwifery diploma programme.
- 25 teachers trained for three-year midwifery diploma.
- 15 centres assessed for midwifery education.

2010

2011

2012

2013

- Continued development of midwifery curriculum, teaching materials and textbooks.
- Midwifery Strategy Workshop inaugural meeting.
- Midwifery appears in the Health Sector Plan.

- Capacity-building for service providers on midwifery, including post-basic training.
- 500+ nurses had received post-basic training on midwifery and returned to their health facilities.



Association

In response to the Government's commitment to introduce a new cadre of professional midwives, the Bangladesh Midwifery Society was established in 2010. Today, the society has grown to include 1,100 members across the country and is a member of the International Confederation of Midwives. The Association plays a key role in raising the visibility of the midwifery profession during advocacy events such as celebrations of the International Day of the Midwife.



Policy and Regulation

The MHTF has assisted with the development of critical midwifery policies and regulations, including: licensing exam guidelines and registration guidelines for new graduates, a code of ethics and standard operating procedures.

In 2016, "Deployment of midwives" was selected by the Ministry of Health and Development Partners as a disbursement linked indicator. Additionally, the Strategic Investment and Project Implementation Plan for the next Bangladesh Health Sector Strategy 2017-2021 incorporates midwives as a cadre to fill gaps in vital maternal newborn and child health care. The Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Act was approved by the Parliament and launched in 2016.

- First International ICM Midwife Award is won by Bangladesh.
- National human resources for health plan finalized with midwifery included.
- Ongoing support for three-year diploma programme.

- 1,200 certified nurse-midwives deployed.
- Midwives strengthen quality emergency obstetric and neonatal care (EmONC) services.
- "Deployment of midwives" selected by the Ministry of Health as a development aid indicator.
- Nursing and Midwifery Act approved.

2014

2015

2016

2017/2018

- First batch of three-year diploma graduates!
- By the end of 2015, 1,600 certified midwives had been trained.

- EmONC mentorship programme established.
- Midwives engaged in maternal death surveillance and response.
- First batch of 600 midwives with three-year diplomas deployed.

Bangladesh experienced five different humanitarian crises just in 2017, including a major refugee influx, large landslides, major flooding and a devastating cyclone. Through non-governmental organizations, 130 midwives were deployed to strengthen the humanitarian response. The midwives work in and around refugee camps, and in remote coastal areas regularly hit with damaging cyclones. Through their work, the lives of the most vulnerable women and children continue to be saved. Midwives have distributed over 4,000 clean delivery kits; conducted over 30,000 antenatal care visits, 3,000 postnatal care visits and 1,000 deliveries; and referred over 200 cases of obstetric emergencies.

Catalytic Impact on Maternal Health

Maternal Health Indicators

INDICATOR	2011	2014
Maternal mortality ratio	237 per 100,000 live births (2011) ¹	176 per 100,000 live births (2015) ¹
Percentage of births with skilled attendant	32% ³	42% ²
Percentage of pregnant women with four-plus antenatal care visits	26% ³	31% ⁴
Percentage of institutional delivery	29% ³	37% ⁴
Postnatal care for mothers	27% ³	34% ⁴



Catalytic Funding

MHTF support for midwifery has catalysed additional funding since 2010.

DONOR	PROJECT YEARS	FUNDING (FISTULA AND EmONC)	MIDWIFERY	TOTAL BUDGET*
MHTF	2011-2018	569,769	106,542	676,311
UNFPA regular resources	2011-2018	3,727,236	1,784,297	5,511,533
Government of Canada	2011-2016	3,689,425		6,149,043
	2017-2022	1,950,000	6,300,000	12,500,000
Government of Sweden	2015-2016		1,085,466	1,085,466
	2017-2021	710,000	5,104,306	6,827,883
Government of the United Kingdom	2016-2021		7,606,950	7,606,950
	2018-2022	2,302,206	150,000	10,381,944
Humanitarian funds (multiple donors**)	2015-2018	5,517,121	1,839,040	9,195,203

*Total budget includes the budget for all UNFPA mandated programme areas and not only MHTF focus areas.

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1 WHO, United Nations Children's Fund, UNFPA, World Bank Group and United Nations Population Division Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group. Maternal Mortality in 1990-2015. Bangladesh. http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/bgd.pdf.

2 United Nations Statistics Division. Millennium Development Goals Database. <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=MDG&f=seriesRowID%3A570>

3 National Institute of Population Research and Training. Bangladesh: Demographic and Health Surveys 2011. Dhaka, Bangladesh. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr265/fr265.pdf>.

4 National Institute of Population Research and Training. Bangladesh: Demographic and Health Surveys 2014. Dhaka, Bangladesh. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR311/FR311.pdf>.

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