

Catholic Relief Services

Ghana: “Encouraging Positive Practices for Improving Child Survival (EPPICS) Child Survival and Health Project” (2011-2015)

Technical Integration (Level of Effort): Maternal and Newborn Care, Nutrition, Malaria

USAID Funding: \$1,750,000

PVO Match Funding: \$438,649

In Ghana, the high level of maternal and neonatal deaths in East Mamprusi (EM) district have been attributed to the following factors: household beliefs and rituals that jeopardize the health of pregnant women and their unborn child and result in delays in seeking prenatal care; delay in recognizing danger signs (in both the mother and the newborn) to make timely decisions to seek care at health facilities; and a low percentage of institutional deliveries. CRS is partnering in EM district with Ghana’s Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ghana Health Services (GHS), which are focused on achieving progress in MDG 4 and 5. The MOH and GHS have identified the need to improve local socio-cultural beliefs and practices related to pregnancy and newborn care, and to encourage the strengthening of civil society structures in order to empower local communities to advocate for improved MNCH services.

This project is incorporating the participation of key community leaders—*Magazias* (“Queen Mothers”), who are the senior most respected female in the community), chiefs, and imams/pastors—as counterparts within a Community-Based Health Information System. These three groups are the custodians of the socio-cultural, traditional and religious practices within their communities, and together they form the Council of Champions (COC) for healthy mothers and babies. The operations research is testing whether the collaboration of these leaders, working with health providers using participatory methods to assess the situation and plan solutions within communities, will overcome barriers to healthier pregnancies and improved newborn outcomes. The Ghana Health Services at the national, district and local levels are interested in testing this approach for potential integration in their strategies.