Strengthening Midwifery Education and Practice in Post-conflict Liberia

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Objectives

• Describe strengthening midwifery education in Liberia
• Outline roles of partners
• Describe challenges in strengthening midwifery education
• Review implementation progress
Small country in West Africa
Civil conflict 1990-03 left country devastated
• destruction of basic health infrastructure,
• complete economy collapse,
• political instability,
• disruption of all sectors of the country,
• over 200,000 people were killed, more displaced
Health system rebuilding with Basic Package of Health Services framework with focus on maternal, neonatal, child, reproductive health
Why midwifery is important to Liberia

- 2011: Essential Package of Health Services designed to
  - Improve access and utilization
  - Midwives identified as cadre with primary responsibility for care to reproductive age women and newborns
Liberia’s health indicators: 2013

- Young population, 55% under 20
- High total fertility rate: 4.7
- Low contraceptive prevalence: 20% (all methods)
- Skilled provider at births: 56%
- High maternal mortality: 770/100,000 (2010)
- Neonatal mortality rate: 26/1000
- Infant mortality rate: 54/1000
Midwifery in context

- Critical health workforce shortage, less than 1.15 health workers per 1000
- Midwives are backbone for MNH care—Provide antenatal, intrapartum, postnatal, newborn and family planning services

Midwifery Schools

- 4 diploma programs - 3 years
- 1 bridging from CM-RM
- 1 BSc Program (new)
Efforts to Improve MNH

- 2006: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare adopts **essential trainings for skilled birth attendants**: Basic Life Saving Skills, Emergency Obstetric Maternal Newborn Care
- >1,000 SBAs (Midwives, Registered Nurses, Licensed practical Nurses and Physician Assistants) trained nationally through MOHSW
Further efforts to improve MNH

- 2007- Setting the Agenda: Road Map to mobilize support, forge new partnerships between government, communities, NGOs, development partners and the private sector.

- 2011- Accelerated Action Plan: Support for implementing the Road Map developed

- 2013- Reducing Maternal/Newborn Mortality: REP (reach every pregnant woman) and RED (reach every district)
Objectives of Road Map

- Increase the number and quality of skilled attendants for 24/7 MNH services
- Increase coverage and access to quality comprehensive and basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care (EmONC), essential newborn care and family planning services
- Expand and strengthen MNH outreach and community services
- Improve management of MNH services
Road Map & midwifery education

Objective

Increase the number and quality of skilled attendants for 24/7 MNH services

Strategies

- Strengthen pre-service education
- Ensure adequate and equitable staffing in health facilities
- Improve in-service training of skilled birth attendants
Midwifery pre-service education strengthening initiative

- Liberian Board for Nursing and Midwifery leads with inclusive approach involving all stakeholders:
  - Training institutions, MOHSW, regulatory and professional bodies, UN agencies, NGOs.
Midwifery PSE Strengthening Initiative

- **PSE clinical standards** - global standards, quality improvement
- **Task Analysis** informs job description, core competencies, curriculum
- **Training, follow-up, mentoring of faculty/preceptors**
PSE strengthening, cont.

- Simulation Center (Skills Lab) management
  - Student performance assessment
- Effective Teaching Skills-classroom & clinical
- Technical updates: Malaria, EmONC, IMNCI, HIV, FP/RH, Nutrition, HBB, HMS
- Enhanced Learning Environment- provided models, books, equipment and supplies for computer and science labs, library and simulation center
2012: Midwifery Education & Midwifery Strategic Plan

Strengthening education, regulation and professional association to

- Produce culturally sensitive, competent midwives who provide high quality midwifery services, and
- Increase number and strength of midwifery programs
Key Strategies/Actions: what we did

- Updated PSE standards → assess institutions
- Action plan monitoring for transparency, sustainability, accountability
- Recruit qualified mw faculty → career development
- Teaching learning centers
- Standard calendar advocacy!
- Technical assistance for RM curriculum
- Scholarship fund
We are not finished yet…challenges

Challenges remain for midwifery education—

1. Insufficient financial support to training institutions
2. Inadequate current textbooks and training / teaching materials
3. Newly created career ladder for midwives, but only one degree program
4. Inadequate staffing for midwifery program, especially in leadership
Progress to date: We’re getting closer!

- Updated Standards - clinical and PSE
- Curriculum development and harmonization
- Faculty technical updates, teaching, training and mentoring
- Clinical sites strengthening
- Midwifery Education, Regulation and Association working together
- Midwifery becoming increasingly visible
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