



Partnership with MOHP, UNFPA, WHO, and GIZ to Foster Midwifery Education, Nepal

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Project location: Nepal



NAMS Midwifery Students after a roleplay activity in the community

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Background

Despite many programs related to women's health, including those promoting institutional deliveries, safe motherhood, capacity building of skilled birth attendants, etc., Nepal's maternal mortality rate has not seen significant improvement within the last five years, going from 281 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011 to 258 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016 (NDHS, 2016). Although government and NGO programs have helped reduce the maternal mortality rate, the target for 2017, i.e. the Second Long-Term Health Plan (1997-2017) goal of no more than 250 deaths per 100,000 live births, was not achieved. Nepal's infant mortality rate has also improved somewhat, going from 46 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 32 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. The neonatal mortality rate is still high as well: 21 deaths per 1,000 live births (NDHS, 2016).

Nepal's government has realized that increasing the number of specialized health professionals, such as qualified midwives, is essential to reducing the country's high maternal and neonatal mortality rates. To this end, the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program was developed and continues to be supported by a consortium of partners, including the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as well as the World Health Organization (WHO), Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and Real Medicine Foundation (RMF). The implementing organizations are the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS) and Kathmandu University (KU), while a third institution, Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS), has been accredited and announced its intention to begin implementing the BMS program during 2018. The consortium functions to ensure support of every aspect of the BMS program without duplication of efforts, working together to build strong cadres of qualified midwives to reduce mortality and morbidity rates among mothers and newborns.

To further address the problem of maternal and neonatal mortality, Nepal's Ministry of Health is planning to implement a Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) Midwifery program to replace the preexisting Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) program. RMF has been involved in the curriculum development for this program in collaboration with other external development partners and organizations including GIZ, UNFPA, the Midwifery Society of Nepal (MIDSON), and the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) as well as implementing universities, midwifery nurses from various hospitals and nursing colleges, and other experts in the field.

RMF's Presence

As an external development partner with MHOP and UNFPA, Real Medicine Foundation's plan for long-term support to midwifery education in Nepal includes the following activities:

- Develop a database for the Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) to track active nurses and midwives in Nepal
- Provide faculty training in collaboration with GIZ and UNFPA
- Strengthen training sites and the skills lab at NAMS in coordination with the MOHP, UNFPA, and other partners by providing relevant teaching and training materials
- Provide one full-time international mentor
- Fund one student scholarship (covering all tuition fees at NAMS) every year for the first 3 years of the program
- Provide selected essential teaching and learning materials to NAMS, such as books, computers, LEDs, and overhead projectors, to ensure that student midwives are provided with an education that is both up-to-date and evidence-based

Program Update

It has been more than a year since the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program was introduced in Nepal. The program is slowly gaining recognition, but there is still much work to be done to effectively increase the number of skilled, competent midwives who will reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the coming days.

The government of Nepal and partners remain invested in the program, with high hopes of effectiveness in the area of maternal and newborn health.

Within this program, RMF Nepal's current priority is to support the Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program at the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), Bir Hospital Nursing Campus. We have been continually supporting the NAMS midwifery program from its inception, including the provision of 1 student scholarship, as well as learning materials and shelving/storage for the skills lab and library.

Between July and September of 2018, RMF was involved in the following activities to promote midwifery education and awareness in Nepal:

- Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS) has been accredited by Nepal Nursing Council and may now commence its Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences program.
- Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) organized a Workshop on Finalization of Minimum Requirements for PCL Midwifery program on August 9, 2018.
- Nepal Nursing Council conducted its second round of training for midwifery educators.
- External development partners (EDPs) conducted a meeting in order to explore new possibilities to increase resources in the field of midwifery education.

Workshop on Finalization of Minimum Requirements for PCL Midwifery Program

Nepal Nursing Council organized the Workshop on Finalization of Minimum Requirements for PCL Midwifery Program on August 9, 2018. This workshop was conducted in order to finalize not only the curriculum content of the PCL Midwifery program, but also its minimum requirements for admission. Other topics of discussion included candidate eligibility and practicum requirements.

The program was chaired by President of NNC Ms. Goma Devi Niraula Shrestha. Many guests were invited, including the Director of Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital interdepartmental collaborative representative Prof. Dr. Geeta Rana, obstetricians and gynecologists, public health experts, education experts, and representatives from other organizations.



The banner for the PCL Midwifery Program workshop

Several distinguished guests made speeches at the workshop. Dr. D.S. Malla, a well-known pioneer of midwifery advocacy in the community, expressed her happiness that formal midwifery education has commenced in Nepal. Dr. Malla said that during her initial days as a practicing medical officer she was very impressed by the nurses supporting women throughout the labor process. She added that a doctor could by no means provide such a support to these women during labor, only a midwife could. She extended her best wishes for the advancement of the program and congratulated everyone who contributed to this tremendous accomplishment.



Dr. D.S. Malla sharing her experiences during the workshop

Distinguished guest Prof. Dr. Geeta Rana also made a speech during the program. She emphasized that maternal mortality and neonatal mortality would decline in the future as a result of government support of midwifery education. After attending a series of presentations on prerequisites for the PCL Midwifery Program, she stressed the need to focus on the use of fetoscopes, the best instruments to assess fetal heart sounds and uterine prolapse, as well as temporary management methods such as ring pessaries and bag-mask ventilation procedures.



Prof. Dr. Geeta Rana delivering a speech during the workshop

Prof. Kiran Bajracharya, President of MIDSON, congratulated everyone in attendance for the official introduction of midwifery education in Nepal. She said that although we are taking small steps in the field of midwifery education, it is not the time to rest and celebrate, but the time to even work harder to ensure that midwives can serve their true purpose. She added that the government must quickly respond to ensure employment opportunities and career advancement for the future graduates of the PCL Midwifery program. Prof. Bajracharya further urged the government to take this call to action seriously. She also asked all of the associated organizations to advocate for the roles of midwives within the healthcare system of Nepal. Developed countries have lower maternal and neonatal mortality rates because they have midwives providing full time service to women, even prior to pregnancy, she said, adding that in Nepal, the health care system needs to integrate new avenues and new practices.

The Workshop on Finalization of Minimum Requirements for PCL Midwifery Program was successful. Participants contributed important input for finalizing the minimum requirements and prerequisites of the PCL Midwifery Program.



RMF Program Coordinator Pragyga Gautam in a discussion with subject experts at the workshop

Karnali Academy of Health Sciences Commences Bachelor of Midwifery Sciences Program

Karnali Academy of Health Sciences (KAHS) is now accredited by Nepal Nursing Council and as a result is able to instate a Bachelor in Midwifery Sciences (BMS) program. After a year-long tedious preparation, the academy is now prepared to welcome its first intake of BMS students.

A team from NNC visited KAHS earlier this year for to assess the feasibility of a BMS program. They found that the institute was prepared for the program aside from its lack of a midwifery skills lab. RMF supported KAHS by providing equipment for the midwifery skills lab which finally rendered KAHS eligible to run the program.

KAHS Nursing Dean Assoc. Prof. Saraswoti Gautam expressed her appreciation and gratitude for RMF's support. According to her, without the equipment provided by RMF, the academy would not have been established for another year. As the institution is located in the remotest area of the country where the need for the midwives is greater, KAHS is especially excited to educate a competent cadre of midwives who will provide services in the surrounding area in the coming years.

KAHS has already advertised for application to the BMS program from eligible candidates. They will soon commence the program with 10 students whose scores on the NAMS entrance examination have placed them on the merit list.



KAHS Nursing Dean Assoc. Prof. Saraswoti Gautam during a midwifery program

Other Advancements in Midwifery Education

- Nepal Nursing Council conducted its second round of training for midwifery educators
- External development partners (EDPs) conducted a meeting in order to explore new possibilities to increase resources in the field of midwifery education.



NAMS Midwifery students dressed up for a roleplay activity