



## Newborn Home Interventions trial, (Newhints) Kintampo, Ghana.

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### Studying the impact of routine home visits of trained volunteers to pregnant women and recently delivered women and their newborns, on newborn mortality in rural Ghana

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**Funders:** Saving Newborn Lives, World Health Organization, Department for International Development

#### Overview

Just under four million babies die each year before reaching one month of age. Up to 50% of these deaths could be prevented through the promotion of a few key practices including clean home delivery, hygienic cord care, thermal care, early and exclusive breastfeeding and care seeking for illness.

The Newhints study aims to develop a feasible and sustainable community based approach to improve neonatal survival in rural Ghana. This is hoped to be achieved through routine home visits by Community Based Surveillance Volunteers (CBSV) who will provide a package of essential newborn care interventions in the third trimester of pregnancy and first week of life.

#### Objectives

- To link with the District Health Management teams to develop a feasible and sustainable intervention to improve newborn care practices through routine home visits in pregnancy and the first week of life
- To evaluate the impact of these home visits on all cause neonatal mortality
- To evaluate their impact on newborn care practices
- To evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the intervention

#### Current status

The study is a cluster-randomized trial and will span a period of three years from 2006 to 2009. The trial is in 3 phases; the first phase involved the intervention design. A series of formative research activities aimed at identifying gaps in knowledge and to improve the feasibility and optimality of the planned intervention were conducted in 2006 and 2007.

The second phase, completed early 2008, consisted of piloting the proposed interventions and the third phase, which started in July 2008, is the full implementation of the intervention by 406 CBSVs in 178 communities. Over 115,000 women in child bearing age are participating in 4-weekly community surveillance to measure the impact of Newhints. Data collection continues until July 2009. If proven successful, Newhints will expand into the control areas.

#### The role of Towards 4+5

Towards 4+5 has continued support for the development, implementation and evaluation of this trial. With the support for one research assistant Towards 4+5 has specifically contributed to building capacity in the field of qualitative research at the Kintampo Health Research Centre. The

focus on building qualitative research capacity has led to the Newhints Formative Research being seen as a template for other countries to follow. The lessons from our qualitative work are being used to feed into studies in Uganda and Tanzania with a learning visit to Newhints planned in April 2009.

Towards 4+5 is also strengthening the collaboration between RPC partners which supports Newhints in developing health system research related to the potential of scaling-up interventions such as Newhints. Furthermore, Towards 4+5 lends its expertise in communication which supports the involvement of local health authorities. This is crucial for successful implementation as it helps to ensure the intervention is sustainable, builds capacity (both of District Health Management teams and researchers) and will help getting research into policy and practice in the long run.

### **Publications**

- Z Hill, A Manu, C Tawiah-Agyemang, T Gyan, K Turner, B Weobong, AHA Ten Asbroek and BR Kirkwood. How did formative research inform the development of a home-based neonatal care intervention in rural Ghana? *JPerinatol* (28) Sup2 S38-45, 2008.
- C Tawiah-Agyemang, BR Kirkwood, K Edmond, A Bazzano and Z Hill  
Early initiation of breast-feeding in Ghana: barriers and facilitators. *JPerinatol* (28) Sup2 S46-52, 2008.
- Hill Z, Tawiah C, Kirkwood B.  
The context of informal abortions in rural Ghana. *Journal of Women's Health*. In press.
- Tawiah C, Hill Z, Bazzano A, Edmond K, Owusu-Agyei O, Kirkwood B.  
Early initiation of breast feeding in Ghana: barriers and facilitators. Poster presentation. Tracking progress in Child Survival countdown to 2015. London 13-14th December 2005.

### **Further information**

<http://www.ghana-khrc.org/newhints.html>

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