



## TOWARDS 4+5 NEWSLETTER, January 2009

### Quarterly update from the Towards 4+5 Research Programme Consortium - *strategic research to inform policy on maternal and newborn health care*

Welcome to the Towards 4+5 Research Programme Consortium newsletter! We hope that it will keep you informed about our recent activities including research, publications and events. For more information about Towards 4+5, or to subscribe to the newsletter, please contact Rebecca Wolfe, Communications Officer. [rebecca.wolfe@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:rebecca.wolfe@lshtm.ac.uk)

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Photo, courtesy of Tom Kelly, was taken during Towards 4+5 related research looking at the impact of a women's group in Makwanpur, Nepal.

### From research to policy and practice Report on the Towards 4+5 annual meeting Ghana, 3-6 November, 2008

This year's annual meeting was hosted by the Kintampo Health Research Centre in Accra, Ghana. The aims of the meeting included: to share research findings with national and regional stakeholders; to review RPC work on integrating maternal and newborn health interventions; and to discuss good practices for getting research into policy and practice.

Participants comprised research partners from all six consortium countries, policy makers from Bangladesh, Ghana, Malawi and Nepal, and three representatives from the Department for International Development (DFID), UK. This diverse mix of people enabled lively discussions about how Towards 4+5 research can more effectively feed into national and international level policies.

A question and answer session with policymakers working in maternal and newborn health highlighted the important role that research can have. One policymaker stated that, "*policymakers like evidence, they respond to evidence. It can be used to push policy through quickly*"

The meeting enabled both researchers and policymakers to identify factors that can help increase the chances of research being used in policy. Specifically, the meeting highlighted the importance of researchers to:

- present findings in a clear format and using language that policy makers can easily understand;
- identify and communicate policy recommendations including information about how to implement policies effectively;
- interact and collaborate with key stakeholders at the beginning of and during the research process.

Policymakers attending the meeting learned to:

- be rigorous in establishing the evidence base for the effectiveness of interventions before scaling up;
- be involved in all stages of the research and increase levels of dialogue between policymakers and researchers.

One day of the workshop was spent discussing the Consortium's work on integration including a policy paper looking at the integration of maternal, newborn and child health activities, and a framework for integrating single interventions. These outputs will be distributed in 2009.

## New series of Towards 4+5 briefing papers

### Improving Evidence-Based Policymaking in maternal and neonatal health: strategies for researchers and policymakers

The drive towards Evidence-Based Policymaking (EBPM) currently dominates public health research, policy and practice; it shapes the perceived credibility of research methods, the types of policies and programmes implemented and funding decisions.

This briefing paper highlights some constraints of the EBPM movement. It provides insights from professionals working in maternal and neonatal health at the global level and in five developing countries. It then makes recommendations on how to improve the role of research in effectively guiding policy-making and programme development.

[www.towards4and5.org.uk/PDFs/briefing\\_paper\\_1.pdf](http://www.towards4and5.org.uk/PDFs/briefing_paper_1.pdf)

### Encouraging women to use professional care at childbirth: does Nepal's Safe Delivery Incentive Programme work?

In 2005, the Government of Nepal introduced an innovative financing scheme as part of its strategy to increase the use of maternity services. The scheme - called the Safe Delivery Incentive Programme (SDIP), includes a cash payment to women who deliver in a health facility.

This briefing note reports on the impact of the SDIP in Makwanpur district. It shows that the intervention has been successful in raising utilisation of services, but many households continue to incur catastrophic health care payments. The briefing note includes implications for low income countries that may be considering a similar strategy.

[www.towards4and5.org.uk/PDFs/briefing\\_paper\\_2.pdf](http://www.towards4and5.org.uk/PDFs/briefing_paper_2.pdf)

### Newborn Home Interventions trial NEWHINTS, Kintampo, Ghana

[www.ghana-khrc.org/newhints.html](http://www.ghana-khrc.org/newhints.html)

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 who will provide a package of essential newborn care interventions in the third trimester of pregnancy and first week of life. The study is a cluster-randomized trial and will span a period of three years from 2006 to 2009.

Towards 4+5 has continued support for the implementation and evaluation of this trial which began in July 2008. With the support for one research assistant Towards 4+5 has specifically contributed to building capacity in the field of qualitative evaluations at the Kintampo Health Research Centre. Furthermore Towards 4+5 supports the involvement of local health authorities which is crucial for successful implementation of Newhints.

### Other news

In December 2008, some researchers from Towards 4+5 submitted written and oral evidence to the UK All Party Parliamentary group on Population, Development and Reproductive health. The inquiry focused on maternal morbidity, an important research theme of the Consortium.

More information is available from the news and events page on the Towards4+5 website:

[www.towards4and5.org.uk/news\\_events.htm](http://www.towards4and5.org.uk/news_events.htm)



### About Towards 4+5

Towards 4+5 is a five year Research Programme Consortium on maternal and newborn health, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK. The goal is to support evidence based policy and practice for maternal and newborn health to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5.

Research is concentrated in five developing countries. These are Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi and Nepal. It focuses on ways to improve mother and infant care at both the facility and community levels.

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