

Danish organisation	Maternity Foundation
Title of the intervention	Strengthening the Ethiopian midwifery profession through increased access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
Partner name(s)	Ethiopian Midwives Association
Amount applied for	500,000 DKK
Country(ies)	Ethiopia
Period (# of months)	18 months

1. Objective and relevance (the world around us)

Despite significant progress in recent years, Ethiopia is still far from reaching the Sustainable Development Goal on Maternal Mortality (SDG 3) target 3.1, which aims to reduce the maternal mortality ratio to 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. In 2017, the maternal mortality ratio in Ethiopia was estimated at 401 per 100,000 live births and challenges surrounding low utilization of maternal health care, and low quality of health care remains.

Midwives play a central role in the provision of maternal health care services as well as comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services more broadly – and investments in midwives and quality midwifery care must therefore be made. In Ethiopia, extensive investments have already been made in the midwifery profession, and the number of midwifery training institutions has grown from 23 in 2009 to 52 in 2021. During the same period, the rate of births attended by skilled health personnel increased from 10% in 2010-2011 to 49.8% in 2019 (The State of the World Midwifery report, 2021). Despite this positive development in the provision of skilled care, a 2016 study found that skills and knowledge gaps persist among providers, which leads to sub-optimal care for some women.

To strengthen the quality of care, it is necessary to continuously invest in the training of midwives both at the university level as well as in-service training to improve the knowledge and skills of the midwifery workforce. However, gaps in knowledge and skills are not the only challenges facing the healthcare system. Amongst the midwives who participated in a study conducted by the Ethiopian Midwives Association (EMWA), 40% were dissatisfied with their profession and nearly half (46%) of the midwives reported that they have the intention to leave the profession. Some of the reasons for their dissatisfaction and lack of motivation include¹:

- A lack of or minimum career development opportunities and limited possibilities to progress into leadership and take part in decision-making both at the facility level and at the various levels of the health administration
- Limited access to capacity building, including formal and informal training opportunities and mentoring, especially for newly graduated midwives in their first years of practice
- A narrow scope of practice, reducing the midwife's role in the labour ward and preventing midwives from providing family planning services, antenatal care, and postnatal care
- Lack of recognition of the midwives' role in health facility management and insufficient monetary rewards and salaries, especially in comparison to other health cadres - as nurses receive a risk allowance three times higher than midwives

¹ Qualitative study conducted as part of the State of Midwifery report, 2019. Eighteen focus group discussions and 34 key informant interviews were conducted across eight regions and two city administration areas.

Only 3% of the midwives who participated in a study conducted by EMwA are involved in leadership positions from the health facility to the ministerial level. More midwives need to find their way into leadership to take part in developing and improving conditions for midwives in Ethiopia and advocate for quality midwifery care. To ensure safe births for women across Ethiopia, it is crucial to foster a working environment where midwives want to stay in the profession and provide critical care for mothers and newborns.

According to EMwA, the number of midwives in Ethiopia is increasing and grew from 4,725 in 2012 to 16,925, in 2021 but the number of members of EMwA has not increased at the same pace. In 2021, there were 8,500 registered members of EMwA. Many recently graduated midwives are not yet members of EMwA and do not benefit from the access to training, network and support that membership in EMwA can provide. At the same time, EMwA is the only professional organisation for midwives and wants to expand its membership base to speak with a stronger voice when advocating for improved working conditions for midwives.

Maternity Foundation (MF) and the Ethiopian Midwifery Association have worked on both joint and solo initiatives over the past twenty years aiming at strengthening the capacity of midwives and the framework of the professional cadre in Ethiopia. A lot has been achieved in these decades, but the challenges outlined above illustrate, that there is more to be done. Maternity Foundation and Ethiopian Midwives Association have therefore decided to join forces to develop a series of activities that aim at further strengthening access to continued professional development, including leadership training opportunities, access to professional networks, and informal peer-to-peer mentoring. Through improved access to training and networking opportunities, we will support the midwives' professional growth and contribute to increasing their motivation. Training and improved access to information and clinical guidelines has proven to boost midwives' knowledge and confidence, both of which are important components of providing quality care to pregnant women and newborns. Motivated and well-informed midwives can also play an active role in bringing evidence-supported information to women, so the women can make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

The key activities of this grant will take place in Addis Ababa under stable conditions. The overall situation in Ethiopia, however, has been changing over the past years and internal conflicts may arise and could potentially interfere with the implementation of activities. MF and EMwA have decades-long experience operating in the Ethiopian context and any cascade-down activities, in case of security issues, situational analysis and mitigation measures will be managed by the EMwA subchapter offices - present in each region of the country. EMwA will support the implementation of the project "on the ground" and communicate with Maternity Foundation on the context and any needed changes and adaptations. The project is estimated to have little impact on the climate as the intervention is based on capacity training and awareness raising and the partners will make use of already installed capacity in the different regions of Ethiopia – effectively reducing unnecessary travel. Flights will only be used when there are no other local travel options that are relatively time effective and safe to use for the participants. Any procurement of services and items will be locally sourced and will aim to avoid the consumption of single-use products. Any staff visits from Denmark will be limited to a minimum and carbon-offsetting quotas will be purchased to minimise the impact of the intercontinental flights.

The partnership/collaborators (our starting point)

Maternity Foundation is a Danish NGO established in 2005. Today we have a small, agile team operating from Ethiopia, India, and Denmark. We have become a global actor in maternal and newborn health with partner engagements in over 15 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, and the Middle East. Maternity Foundation uses innovative digital health solutions and learning programmes to support healthcare workers with instant, competency-based learning and training, and up-to-date clinical guidelines. Our Safe Delivery+ programme encompasses a digital learning and training platform which aims to provide

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healthcare workers with the support, opportunities for continued learning and development, as well as access to critical guidelines and protocols – everything they need to support healthier pregnancies and safer deliveries for women and babies. The Safe Delivery+ programme was developed in response to the needs of healthcare workers in low-resource and humanitarian settings.

The Safe Delivery App (the App) is MF's most recognizable solution. It is a smartphone application that provides skilled birth attendants with direct and instant access to internationally recognized and current clinical guidelines on Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care and a selection of other essential preventive protocols. To date, MF has reached more than 200,000 healthcare workers with the Safe Delivery App and provided training to more than 15,000 healthcare workers. A series of studies have been conducted that document the positive effect on clinical knowledge and skills from using the Safe Delivery App².

Maternity Foundation has been present in Ethiopia since 2005 and today, we have an office in Addis Ababa, and staff located in the regions of implementation (Afar, Amhara, Oromia, and Somali region). MF has experience implementing capacity-building projects for a variety of donors including UNICEF, UNFPA and Novo Nordisk Foundation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, MF designed and delivered several online training packages to midwives, ensuring access to continued training opportunities under the COVID-19 restrictions on movements. Through this experience, MF gathered valuable experience and capacity in how to optimally schedule and facilitate remote trainings in Ethiopia where distances are vast and travel time-consuming and costly, and where surges of insecurity at times prevent travel. These experiences are particularly valuable and will inform the design of the proposed initiative. MF is also a member of technical working groups in the Ministry of Health and provides inputs to the development of new training guidelines and the professional development framework for midwives. MF is the technical lead on the project and is responsible for developing materials and training packages.

The Ethiopian Midwives Association (EMwA) is a national, non-profit, professional association that represents and works to strengthen midwives and midwifery care in Ethiopia and is the sole organisation representing the midwifery profession in the country. EMwA was formally established in 1992 and has been a member of the International Confederation of Midwives since 1993. It aims to reduce maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality in Ethiopia through a midwifery-led continuum of care. Today EMwA has about 8,500 members and represents approximately half of the midwives in the country. EMwA's main office is in Addis Ababa and the organisation has chapter offices in regions and zones of Ethiopia that function independently. The chapter offices are represented by focal persons in each region, who are responsible for advocating for the midwifery profession. The chapter structure ensures, that initiatives developed at the central level can be cascaded to members across the country, and this structure will also support the roll-out of project initiatives beyond Addis Ababa.

EMwA forms part of several technical working groups at the Ministry of Health including safe motherhood, family planning, adolescent and youth, national ethical and medico-legal committee, pre-service education, continued professional development (CPD), sexual and reproductive health, and quality assurance. As a member of these technical working groups, EMwA provides and shares technical inputs and expertise in the development and revision of national guidelines and protocols, development, and accreditation of CPD courses, and revision of Midwifery curriculums; where other development partners, including Maternity Foundation, also take part in selected working groups based on their expertise.

EMwA also has the experience and expertise in providing capacity-building training including mentorship, coaching, and leadership, COVID-19 prevention and management, long-acting and permanent family planning methods, comprehensive and basic emergency obstetrics and newborn care, institutional design,

² <https://www.maternity.dk/publications/>

MISP, GBV and other trainings for more than 4000 health professionals. EMwA conducts two big annual events gathering 250-350 representative midwives from all regions: International Day of Midwives and the General Assembly/Annual conference. These annual events will be used to disseminate new training opportunities developed in this project and facilitate the establishment of informal peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities.

EMwA and Maternity Foundation have undertaken various activities in partnership starting in early 2014. These activities include contextualising the contents of the Safe Delivery App for the development of the Ethiopia version, and provision of SDA-integrated Training-of-Trainer courses to midwifery educators and care providers. EMwA and MF have also previously developed accredited Safe Delivery App integrated courses for midwives on selected topics.

This project thus capitalises on EMwA's wide geographical presence in Ethiopia and Maternity Foundation's deep experience with digitally enabled training opportunities to make training and networking opportunities more easily available to midwives across the country.

Most of the activities in the proposed project will be developed and led by EMwA and MF Ethiopia office staff. The Communication Manager from Maternity Foundation Denmark will support the project with a communication workshop in Ethiopia and mentoring for the communications focal point in EMwA. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation support will be provided by the MEARL Manager in Maternity Foundation Denmark, in support of the M&E Officer in the MF Ethiopia office. Both will be covered by Maternity Foundation as its own contribution to the budget (self-financed).

EMwA holds the main responsibility for communicating with members and potential member midwives and plays the lead role in reaching the target group with the proposed initiatives. EMwA will likewise lead in organising the annual midwifery conference and events. A substantial part of the project costs will go to payroll costs in MF Ethiopia office and EMwA to implement the project activities.

Target groups, objectives, and expected results (our intervention)

The proposed project aims to improve midwives' access to training and networking opportunities and thereby support their professional growth and increase their motivation. The activities proposed to achieve the intended results are grouped under three bundles: expanding EMwA's membership base and engagement, capacity building by offering easy-to-access accredited training through digital platforms and leadership training and finally, strengthening the professional community through professional events and networking opportunities.

EMwA has 8,500 members and aims to onboard at least 500 additional members over the project period. All of the members are potential beneficiaries of the new accredited digital/online CPD training opportunities provided in the project as they will have open access. Additionally, the project will explicitly target less experienced midwives with training initiatives as recently graduated midwives are more insecure and have the highest need for additional support to build the confidence needed to perform quality midwifery care. The project aims to onboard new members to EMwA, and especially young graduates will be targeted for onboarding communication. As the project aims to increase EMwA's membership numbers as well as strengthen the organisation's position vis-a-vis the government, it is anticipated that all the members of EMwA will benefit from EMwA's strengthened communication and receive content relevant to them.

A subset of the members, between 350-500, will be targeted for more specific training initiatives. MF and EMwA will jointly identify areas where the midwives are in most need of training opportunities. EMwA will deploy different mechanisms to identify the midwives for the specific training including assessing the need

during the general assembly and IDM celebration whereby 350- 500 midwives will attend each event. In addition, regional representativity will be taken into consideration. The secondary target group that indirectly benefits from the initiatives includes all the 8500 members, the newly joining members in addition to mothers and newborns using maternal health services across Ethiopia where trained EMwA members are employed.

Objective 1.1: By December 2024, current and prospective members of EMwA experience improved communication from EMwA

Objective 1.2: By December 2024, EMwA membership numbers have increased by 500 individuals as a result of targeted communication efforts.

Activities

- 1.1 Conduct a survey to assess members' communication needs
- 1.2 Conduct a workshop to strengthen the communication capacity in EMwA
- 1.3 Develop communication campaign and materials for onboarding of new members
- 1.4 Launch communication campaign
- 1.5 Conduct a follow-up survey to assess members' satisfaction

Under objectives 1.1 and 1.2

A baseline survey will be sent out to a subset of the members to assess their current satisfaction with EMwA's communication and their training, networking and communication needs going forward. A follow-up survey will be implemented at the end of the project to assess to what extent the project succeeds in increasing the members' satisfaction with EMwA's communication and addressing their information needs.

EMwA has identified communication with existing and prospective members as a priority. Therefore, MF's communication team will host a communication workshop and provide mentoring support to EMwA communication staff. The workshop will focus on video and visual communication to provide short, concise visual content on topics identified in the baseline survey to EMwA members that can easily be absorbed by busy working professionals through YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, email and newsletter. Creating content that members can easily access, use, and share increases midwives' ability to take control of their learning. This is important as many EMwA members are adult learners, who live busy lives and might not be able to join multi-day classroom trainings. These platforms will also enable members to share information more broadly including internationally accredited online courses, scholarship opportunities, free trainings and application for funding, training opportunities and other networking for experience sharing including twinning projects, and opportunities at the regional level to strengthen South-South relationships and experience sharing.

The materials for the communication campaign training will be developed by the communication department of MF Denmark and consultation will be made with EMwA for careful tailoring of contents based on local needs. The communication workshop will be conducted during one of the General Assembly meetings of the Midwives Association so that all invited members for the event will be able to attend. Selected members and staff from EMwA and MF will also be trained on how to cascade this kind of training/campaign so that they may be replicated during other events (General Assembly and IDM) and more members can be trained on communication strategies and networking.

Activities under objective 1 will be led by MF and EMwA will collaborate and coordinate as necessary

Objective 2.1: By December 2024, all EMwA members have access to accredited digital training opportunities and at least 200 members have achieved a certificate

Objective 2.2: By December 2024, 20 individuals have completed the Midwifery Leadership training and initiatives change projects at their facilities

Activities

- 2.1 Develop module certificates in the SDA MyLearning
- 2.2 Accredite the Safe Delivery App modules for independent learning and blended courses for continued professional development
- 2.3 Roll out CPD courses through EMwA chapters
- 2.4 Develop a phase-based leadership training package within a change project
- 2.5 Roll-out leadership training to *best midwives* of the year
- 2.6 Conduct follow-up for the leadership training provided

Under objectives 2.1 and 2.2

Under this objective, we aim to strengthen midwives' access to accredited training in their own time by making learning content more easily available. This will be achieved through the accreditation of the clinical modules in the Safe Delivery App so that midwives can receive continued professional development points when they complete each module assessment and collect continuing education units (CEUs) to get a total of 30 CEUs per year and 90 CEUs over three years, which is mandatory for the renewal of their professional license. Together with EMwA, MF will work on accrediting the whole or selected modules in the Safe Delivery App depending on the capacity development needs of its members. After the accreditation Training-of-Trainers, trainings will be provided to EMwA chapter volunteers, so they are capacitated to replicate and cascade the introductory SDA trainings to members.

The training targets a subset of EMwA's members and prospective members with the possibility of scaling up to reach all members upon successful testing. After the completion of the accreditation of the Safe Delivery App, a subset of members will receive an invitation to join an introductory training to the SDA. A minimum target of 500 midwives from various regions will be reached through the EMwA chapter structures. The goal is that all of them start a module test in MyLearning and at that least 200 achieve a module certificate whereby they receive Continued Education Units. The onboarding of the new SDA users from EMwA and their progression will be tracked through the tracking system of the Safe Delivery App.

The leadership training component will focus on building leadership skills for quality improvements at the health facilities for the full duration of six months. A selected group of midwives will be invited to join the *Midwife Leadership* training provided jointly by EMwA and MF. The training targets ten midwives per year.

Each year, EMwA celebrates the *Best Midwives* from the regions who are celebrated at the annual midwifery conference. Today the *Best Midwife* recognition is not accompanied by a prize of any sort. With this proposal, we want to build on the existing process by offering Best Midwife winners to join a *Midwives in Leadership* training focused on how to push for change for improvements at the facility level. The training will piggyback on the annual midwifery conference and selected midwives are invited to stay for an additional week and participate in the training before their return to their respective regions to identify an improvement initiative to lead. Follow-up support will be provided through EMwA chapter structures and online sessions.

This initiative will be key to supporting more midwife leaders who can take on leadership roles at their facility or the local and national administration offices. Recognising *Best Midwives* by offering participation in leadership training is also expected to increase motivation among EMwA members to strive to become the *Best Midwife* of the year. The activities under objective 2, will be led by EMwA and MF will support them.

All CPD courses and leadership training will be provided by EMwA and its chapter offices. MF will assist in the course development and finalization of the Safe Delivery App modules.

Objective 3: Strengthen midwives' access to professional networks by supporting annual events and establishing dedicated networking sessions

Activities

3. Support annual conferences and events of EMwA

3.1 Conduct experience-sharing presentations and updates on guidelines for members at the annual conferences

3.2 Facilitate informal peer-to-peer mentoring matching meetings, cascade to chapter level if successful

Under objective 3

The project supports EMwA in organising the annual midwifery conference. The conference creates a space for midwives to come together and learn about the most recent scientific developments as well as network with peers and strengthen the sense of belonging to a professional community. 200-300 EMwA members from across the different regions will be targeted for the annual midwifery conference hosted by EMwA. The conference takes place annually in Addis Ababa. The project will explore how to capitalise on EMwA's chapter structure to also host side events locally and engage a broader group of midwives. At the conference, Maternity Foundation will host introductory trainings on the Safe Delivery App and the possibility of achieving Continued Education Units through the SDA module tests will be disseminated to EMwA members. MF will also host networking sessions to explore if informal peer-to-peer mentoring could be of interest to members and support building confidence and motivation among midwives. If informal peer-to-peer mentoring is well received, the approach will be cascaded through the EMwA chapter structure.

Activities under Objective 3 will be led by EMwA, and MF will support and coordinate. As visualised in Figure 1. Below, the expected overall impact of the project is that midwives will have improved access to training and networking opportunities, including prospects of participating in leadership training supporting their professional development and improving motivation. In this regard, the project will help to strengthen the EMwA through the increase of its member pool, capacity building of its members through the online trainings

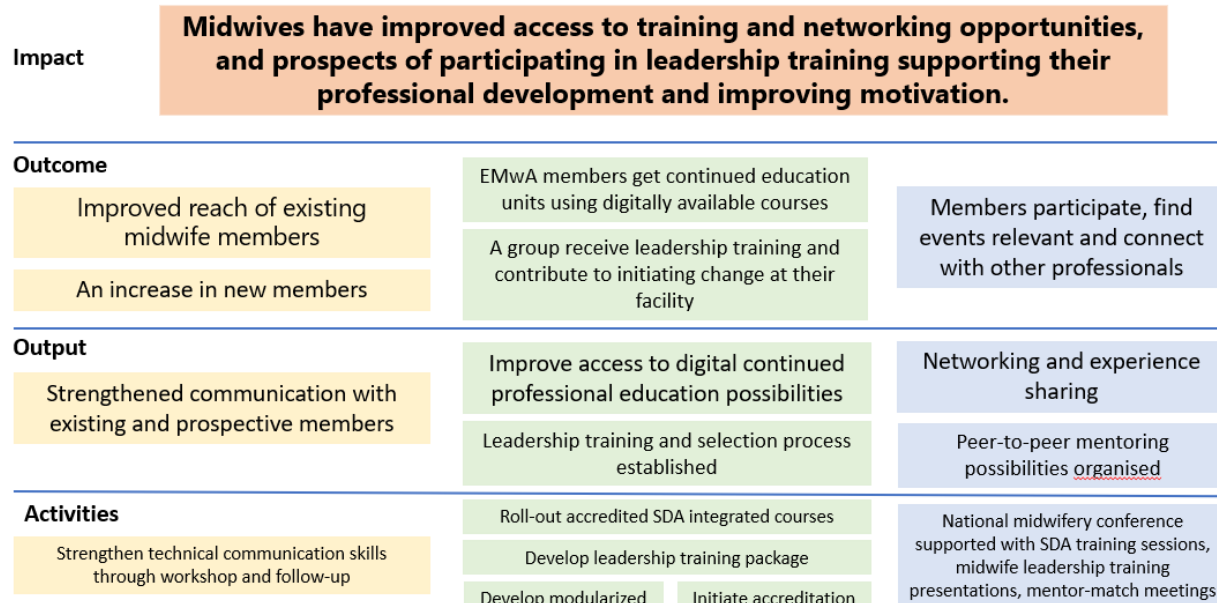


Figure 1: Theory of Change

and the chapter office representatives who will be involved actively in the leadership trainings and the outreach communication strategy. After the project ends, the EMwA will continue to increase its members by providing additional online free trainings. In addition, the annual conferences will create a good opportunity to continuously update midwives on updated guidelines, novel ways of networking, communication, and online training opportunities.

This project collaboration is the first step of what will hopefully be a longer engagement between MF and EMwA in Ethiopia. If this project is successfully implemented, we hope to apply for CISU funding to build on our learnings from the project and support a global initiative bringing together midwifery associations from other countries to enable knowledge and experience sharing across nations and cultures, as well as provide leadership and negotiation training for the participating associations.