

Healing the Wounds of War: Reducing Maternal Mortality in Darfur

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Zurab Elzarov

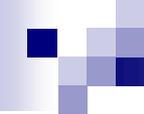
Chief a.i., Protection of Civilians/Humanitarian Liaison Section

United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)

El Fasher, North Darfur State, Republic of Sudan

Background

- The causes and rate of maternal death in Sudan are aggravated by ongoing conflicts and resulting displacement of population.
- From 1990 to 2015, the global maternal mortality ratio declined by 44%: from 385 deaths to 216 deaths per 100,000 live births. In Sudan, however, the maternal mortality rate stood at 311 deaths /100,000 live births.
- Darfur region of Sudan is probably among the most dangerous places in the world in which to give birth.
- In August 2013, Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health together with WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA launched the "Sudan's National Acceleration Plan for Maternal and Child Health".



North Darfur State overview

- North Darfur is one of the five Darfuri states located in western Sudan.
- The women of child bearing age are estimated at 501,000, with 74,000 pregnant women.
- There are 1,115 village midwives available in the state.
- Maternal mortality is higher in rural areas as well as in conflict-affected areas where healthcare structures are mostly affected, causing the death of women due to the lack of access to skilled routine and emergency healthcare services.

North Darfur project objectives

In 2013-2014, UNAMID and North Darfur SMOH an MoU on training 50 village midwives in North Darfur state to:

- reduce the insufficiency of maternal health services across the remote and isolated communities;
- empower people “at-risk”, especially pregnant women and other vulnerable community Members;
- reduce the maternal mortality and child mortality cases in the identified communities



North Darfur project methodology

- 50 women were selected by the SMOH Reproductive Health Department from various localities in North Darfur.
- The project was implemented within twelve months of intensive theoretical and practical sessions covering a wide range of issues related to reproductive health.
- The training was conducted at the Midwifery School in El Fasher.
- Selected students were hosted in the school for the entire period of the training and participated in various types of training activities



North Darfur project phases

The project was carried out in three phases:

- First phase: theoretical sessions.
- Second phase: practical sessions with the use of models.
- Third phase: practical sessions in health centres for antenatal care and at maternity hospital for conducting deliveries. During this phase, the students were trained on how to identify complications and on early referral for avoiding obstetric complications.



North Darfur project results

At the end of the project, the trained midwives were deployed to their respective localities to provide midwifery services to 20,000 people in North Darfur state.



Project follow-up

Based on the success of the initiative, similar projects have been developed and are currently being implemented in West Darfur and Central Darfur states



West Darfur State

- Limited access to primary healthcare delivery services in West Darfur state, such as obstetric and gynaecological care, is hampered by poor road conditions and transportation network.
- As a consequence, the majority of rural women do not have access to primary healthcare services such as antenatal and postnatal care.
- The problem is exacerbated by lack of trained midwives to attend to pregnant women during labor. Lack of primary healthcare facilities and unavailability of skilled midwives in remote and isolated areas of West Darfur state have been resulting in the untimely deaths of pregnant women while being transported by horses and camels to the nearest medical facilities in locality or state capitals.

West Darfur project objectives

Based on the successful project implemented in North Darfur state, UNAMID entered into discussions with the West Darfur State Ministry of Health (SMoH) and the Sudan Red Crescent Society (SRCS) to explore the opportunities for conducting midwifery skills training in the state.

A joint project was developed to identify 20 young women from different parts of West Darfur state to provide them with intensive training on reproductive health and midwifery skills.



West Darfur project methodology and results

20 women were selected by the SMOH from Krenik and Beida localities in West Darfur, based on gaps identified during the needs assessment, to provide primary healthcare services to pregnant women upon completion of the midwifery skills training.

They received intensive theoretical and practical sessions, covering a wide range of reproductive health issues.

Selected students participated in various types of training activities, including lectures, practical sessions, group work, homework, presentations, demonstrations, etc.

At the end of the project, the trained midwives were given start-up tools and deployed to their respective localities to provide midwifery services to local community members.

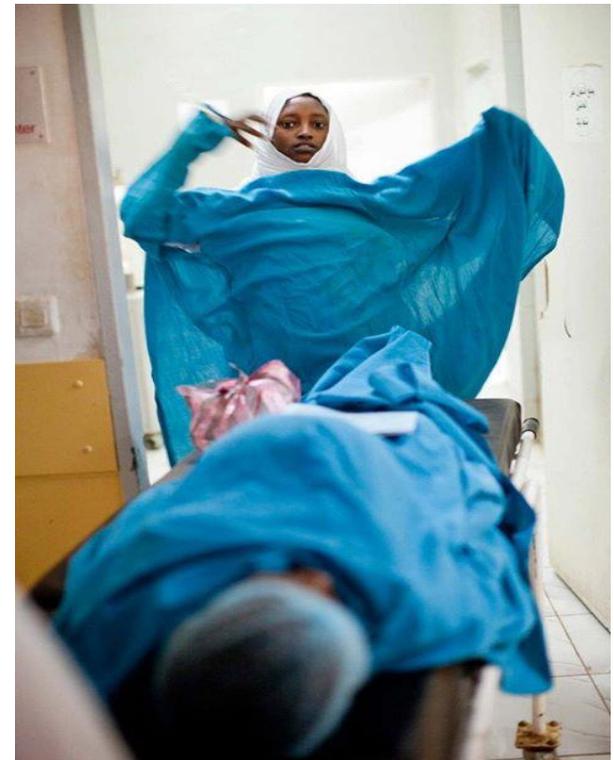


Central Darfur State overview

- The state of reproductive health in Central Darfur state is appalling. In 2010, the maternal mortality rate was 322 deaths per 100,000 live births; the infant mortality rate was 80 deaths per 1,000 live births; and under-five mortality rate was 66 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Lack of knowledge on reproductive health among the local community members, scarcity of economic resources, and significant displacement of population due to insecurity, were all the contributing factors.
- However, a key reason for this situation was lack of community/village midwives. Central Darfur state is well below its target coverage of 1 community midwife for every 1,000 people, and has identified a gap of 750 community midwives for the state.
- Presently, most of women in Central Darfur state are only able to access traditional, none evidence-based antenatal care.

Central Darfur project objectives

To address the afore-mentioned challenges and based on the successful implementation of the Village Midwifery Training Project in North Darfur, UNAMID and the Central Darfur State Ministry of Health (SMoH) devised a joint project to address the reproductive health gaps in local communities by training village midwives in remote and isolated areas of the state. The overall objective of the project is to ensure the management of normal (uncomplicated) pregnancies, childbirth and immediate postnatal period; and identification, management and referral of complications in women and new-borns.



Central Darfur project methodology and results

The project selected 50 women with diverse background and strong motivation to become midwives.

They were provided with intensive theoretical and practical sessions covering a wide range of issues related to reproductive health. Selected students from various parts of Central Darfur State participated in various types of training activities.

At the end of the project, the newly trained midwives were also provided with start-up tools and deployed to their respective areas to provide midwifery services to local community members.



Conclusion

Reducing maternal mortality is one of the major challenges to the healthcare system in Darfur. In the current circumstances, the government, UNAMID, and international organizations should continue to invest in reducing the maternal and child mortality rates in Darfur, by mobilizing the existing resources and advocating for availability of all services that are directed towards improving the maternal health in the region.



Thank you!

