GOAL AREA 1

Every child survives and thrives

Global Annual Results Report 2020

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Case Study 1: Benin: Optimized neonatal and maternal care model addresses quality of care issues

Neonatal mortality and maternal mortality remain a major concern in Benin, where the latest Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2018) showed 30 newborn deaths per 1,000 live births and 347 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. In 2018, in the Zoboza health district of Benin, UNICEF launched an optimized care model for newborns and mothers based on quality assurance with a patient-centred approach.

UNICEF developed a capacity-building plan, based on the initial evaluation of the performance of health workers and health-care facilities. New equipment and medicines were purchased. An integrated package of clinical interventions and a community package were implemented by quality improvement teams with the support of the district coaching team.

With support from UNICEF Canada, the Bempu hypothermia alert bracelet was introduced, a 'game-changer' in ensuring that low-birthweight newborns discharged home were monitored by their mothers. The bracelet notifies the mother if the baby becomes hypothermic, in which case the mothers are encouraged to use kangaroo mother care (KMC) to warm their babies. Community health workers (CHWs) take on a leadership and surveillance role for KMC, the use of the Bempu bracelet, breastfeeding and nutrition practices.

Since 2018, the number of newborn deaths per year dropped from nine to two and the number of maternal deaths from seven to two. Regular monitoring of indicators has led to improved quality of services. Building on these promising results, the Government of Benin and UNICEF scaled up the programme by extending the optimized care model to three new health districts in 2020. The project has also raised the interest of the Ministry of Health and partners such as the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Belgian Cooperation in supporting its expansion.

A low weight newborn wearing the Bempu bracelet to prevent hypothermia.