

Improving maternal & child healthcare worldwide

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29th July 2016 Strengthening hospital based neonatal care at Brikama Major Health Centre in The Gambia

Maternal & Childhealth Advocacy International (MCAI) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with registration number SC043467.

The charitable purposes of MCAI are to advance health by saving and improving the lives of seriously ill pregnant women, children, and babies in hospitals in areas of extreme poverty by empowering and enabling our in-country partners to strengthen emergency healthcare so that every infant, child, and pregnant woman and adolescent can receive high quality emergency healthcare without delay.

Charitable income for the year 2015 totalled £213,759. Of expenditure, £208,280 was spent directly on charitable activities. In addition, MCAI medical and other specialists donated a total of 700 days towards the charity's programme work overseas. The Honorary Executive Director works on a voluntary part-time basis on managerial and strategic activities. The Honorary Medical Director works full time on a voluntary basis on the operational activities of the charity. The project leads, who have overall management and operational responsibility for each international project, also work as volunteers, as do MCAI trustees.

BACKGROUND: Two years ago when MCAI began work in Brikama, an extremely impoverished area of The Gambia, there were over 6000 births per year in the hospital and a maternal mortality rate of around 1% (that is around 60 maternal deaths per year). The mortality rates for the new-born infant were undocumented and extremely high. During the last two years, 3 international volunteer obstetricians from MCAI have established a model maternity unit programme where, not only has service delivery been optimised, but 4 Gambian doctors and two senior midwives have been trained in advanced obstetrics. From January 1st 2016 to 30th June 2016 there have been 2989 births in the hospital with only one maternal death which occurred 2 weeks after birth and within 5 minutes of arriving at the hospital in such a critically ill state there was no time for resuscitation. Around 30 maternal deaths have already therefore been prevented this year by this major upgrade to the maternity unit. However, the basic hospital care for new-born infants remains poorly developed.

AIMS: There is an urgent need for a new building adjacent to the maternity unit to provide basic hospital care for up to 10 babies who need life-saving hospital care along with their mothers.

There is also a need for a training programme for a Gambian doctor and senior nurses who will specialise as advanced neonatal nurse practitioners able to concentrate on providing sustainable new-born hospital care. The budget for this 2-year project has been designed so that a Gambian paediatrician supported by trainee neonatal nurse practioners manage the project with support from international paediatricians and advanced neonatal nurse practitioners from MCAI who will develop the training and ensure quality control in both service delivery and training.

For the service delivery to be effective for the new-born infant, the provision of 24 hours a day high quality obstetric care, including midwifery, anaesthetic, nursing and auxillary staff working in the maternity unit and operating theatre is also essential and this is the subject of a parallel application for funds. The Minister of Health has written a letter of support for this next phase of the programme which will be undertaken according to Memorandum of Understanding between MCAI, MOH, UNFPA and WHO.

The total budget is summarised below.

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