



Empowering Midwives

for Better Mother and Child Health



Amref Health Africa empowers Kenyan midwives in an entrepreneurial way to generate their own income while also improving the quality of their services. Mothers and children benefit from improved access to quality pregnancy and under five care.

High quality and affordable maternal care is under pressure

1. Shortage of midwives due to lack of government funds

Kenya faces a shortage of 180,000 midwives. The country currently has around 2,500 employed midwives, but the government does not have enough funds to employ 70% of the 3,000 midwives who graduate annually. This resulted in almost 13,000 midwives who are not **formally employed** in Kenya at the moment, even though they did finish their required education. Research has shown that **well-trained midwives are key** to providing adequate and sensitive care that a woman needs during pregnancy and childbirth. They can help prevent two thirds of all maternal deaths and half of newborn deaths.

2. Mother and child malnutrition

Furthermore, **malnutrition** is a major public health issue in Kenya, causing over half of all deaths of children under five. In 2014, more than one in four children were too short given their age, better known as **stunted**. It is a largely irreversible outcome of inadequate nutrition and repeated bouts of infection during the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

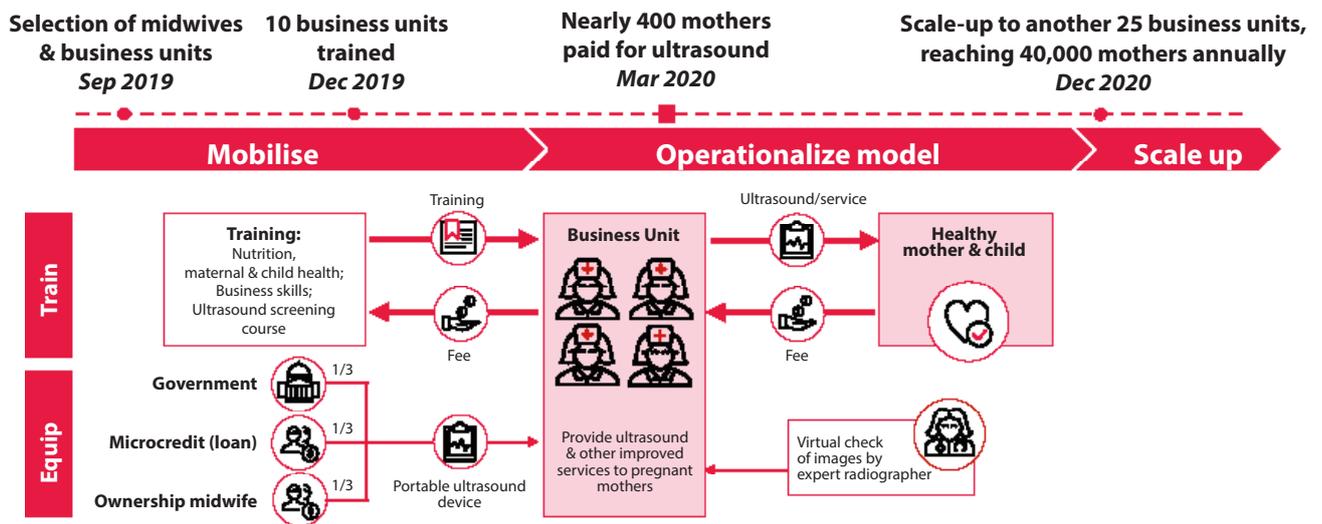
The solution

Since 2016, the Amref International University (AMIU) has been training underemployed and unemployed midwives to improve the access to mother and child services, while at the same time creating business opportunities for midwives. The midwives are trained in three different modules: (1) business skills & entrepreneurship, (2) maternal healthcare trends and (3) applied maternal and child nutrition.

However, it became clear that there was a dire need to add a fourth module to the existing training courses. Ultrasound technology plays a critical role in healthcare provision, since it significantly reduces maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Nevertheless, **only 25% of pregnant women** in Kenya have access to an **ultrasound** in the entire period of their pregnancy, compared to 100% of at least two ultrasounds in the Netherlands.

This is why Amref and Philips Foundation joint forces in December 2019 to expand the existing midwives program with an **ultrasound screening course**. By providing both unemployed and underemployed midwives with an ultrasound device, and training them in business skills against a fee, Amref empowers midwives to generate their own income while also improving the quality of their services. One ultrasound device is shared by multiple midwives, as the devices are becoming increasingly portable, digital, and connected. Pregnant mothers are being charged 5 USD for a single screening, compared to an average of 15 USD in other health facilities.

The midwives are supported by expert radiographers to ensure good quality healthcare.

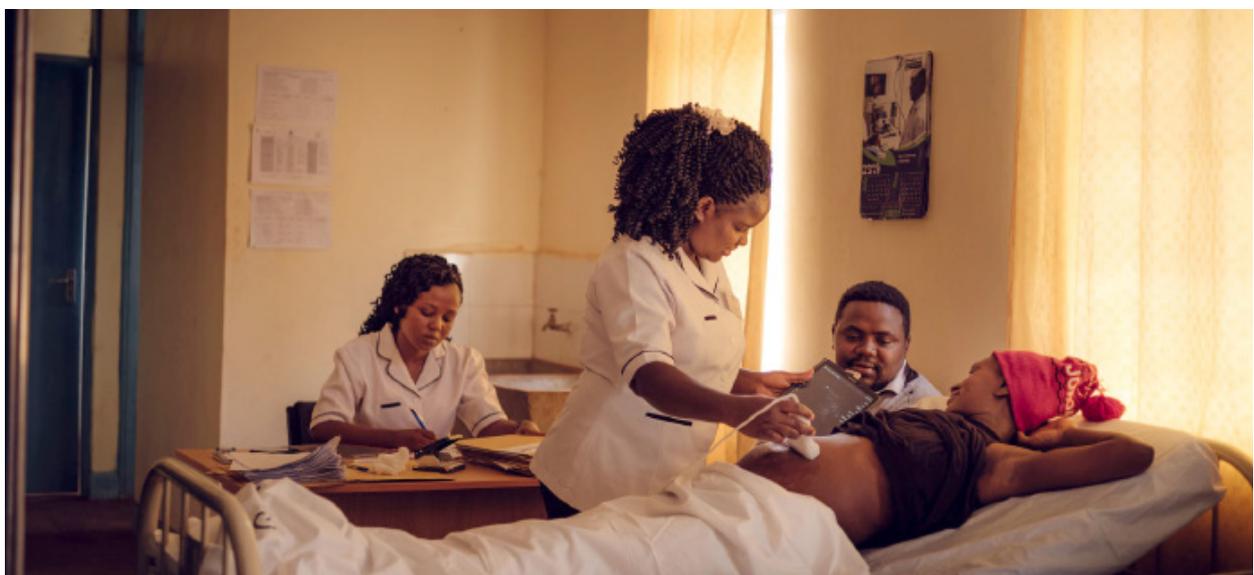


The pilot project

The main goal of the pilot is to analyse the mothers’ willingness to pay for an ultrasound, to examine the ability of midwives to become social entrepreneurs, and to test the **viability of the proposed business case**.

Together with the Philips Foundation, forty selected midwives from 10 business units in Kajiado and Kisii County received **training in providing ultrasounds and quality services** in October 2019. This included breastfeeding coaching, birth companion care services and new-born care. They were trained through two weeks of eLearning and five days of face-to-face training. The midwives were then provided with hands-on support supervision and coaching for two weeks, prior to working on their own with minimal support from expert radiographers. Nearly 1,000 pregnant mothers were freely screened during the training period of the midwives.

The midwives successfully finished the required courses and an increasing number of mothers is willing to pay for the service. Since the installment of the user fee of 5 USD in the beginning of January 2020, about **400 mothers** were screened and paid for the service in about two months’ time.



What impact will we make?

The result of empowering midwives is threefold: (1) **increased employment opportunities for midwives** directly relating to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8* 'decent work and economic growth'; (2) **enhanced and more resilient healthcare system**, and lastly, (3) **increased health outcomes for mothers and children**. Increased access to quality care ultimately leads to a reduction in maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, as well as less malnutrition among children under five. Therefore, it contributes to SDG 3 'good health and well-being': better maternal and child health outcomes.

Next steps

We are in the middle of the pilot phase in Kajiado and Kisii County, which will last until the end of 2020. Given the current COVID-19 developments and its impact on healthcare delivery, we are discussing potential restructuring possibilities of the pilot.

Based on the successful pilot, Amref Health Africa and Philips have the ambition to scale the program to another five counties in Kenya in 2021. In each county, five business units will be created, ran by approximately four midwives per unit, thereby reaching around **40,000 pregnant women annually**. At the same time, we are exploring potential partnership opportunities with commercial banks, donors, and impact investors. We also engage the county governments and share our lessons learned and first results, to be able to involve them even more during scale-up.

How you can help

To support the scale-up we are looking for:

1. Partners that could bring in **knowledge and expertise** to train the midwives, especially in maternal and child nutrition.
2. Based on preliminary projections, we are looking to raise **€250,000** in total for the scale-up to another five counties in Kenya. This will be used to finance a part of the Lumify ultrasound devices and part of the training fee (the program is carried out at small scale, so the out-of-pocket training fee per midwife is still relatively high and support is requested).
3. We are also seeking **impact investors** that consider investing in the innovative model.

*. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all countries in 2015 as a universal commitment to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

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This project is a collaborative effort of Amref Health Africa and Philips Foundation, supported by the expertise and innovations from Royal Philips.

Amref Health Africa (“**Amref**”) is the largest international non-governmental health organization in Africa, that aims to improve the health of people by partnering with and empowering communities, and by strengthening health systems.

The **Philips Foundation** is a registered charity that was established in July 2014 as the central platform for Philips’ CSR activities – founded on the belief that through innovation and collaboration we can solve some of the world’s toughest challenges and make an impact where it really matters.

Royal Philips (“**Philips**”) is a leading health technology company focused on improving people’s health and enabling better outcomes across the health continuum from healthy living and prevention, to diagnosis, treatment and home care.

