



## international federation of infection control

### Report Back from 2010 IFIC Covidien Grant Awardees

The 2010 IFIC-Covidien Grant to Make Childbirth Safer was awarded to the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board Life Abundant Primary Health Care Program (CBCHB) in 2010. The team of Kakute Peter Newnefu, Dorothy Meyer and Knkwan Jacob Gobte now report on their work to improve the traditional birth attendants' (TBA) infection control practices in 5 pilot clinics in rural Cameroon.

CBCHB's health care system includes 5 hospitals, 26 health centres and 46 primary health centers (PHC) in the West Africa's Republic of Cameroon. Given the limited availability of skilled health providers, unskilled birth attendants provide perinatal services in 40 PHCs. Nurse Supervisors visit periodically to give immunizations and consult on difficult cases.

Several issues make safe motherhood a challenge. Piped water is available in only 3 of the 40 PHC maternities. Local village committees manage the health centers and do not always understand or value infection control. Sites often lack a means to sterilize medical equipment, and thus transmission of hepatitis b, c and HIV infections is a constant risk. The dedicated and motivated village birth attendants have benefited from 'on the job' but not formal health care training.

After assessing the sites, the infection control (IC) team adapted materials from EngenderHealth's IC course. They trained eleven Nurse Supervisors and 26 traditional birth attendants. The team also gave a 4 hour presentations to members of the Village Health Committees, community members and PHC staff to discuss the importance of infection prevention project, how to use the equipment they contributed, and the need to maintain records of neonatal infections and deaths. At each site, the IC team assessed the number of deliveries, the available supplies and then distributed as appropriate, 5 sterile gloves, 100 exam gloves, 1 liter of methylated alcohol, 5 cubes of savon soap, a pot for boiling equipment after use, kerosene stove, and a bottle of povidine 10% solution. Reporting forms were distributed with instructions.

After training, the 26 TBAs were asked what they planned to accomplish in the coming year. Some 43% thought they could improve handwashing, 46% thought they could keep the delivery area clean, establish a cleaning schedule, and/or



arrange for a pot to boil instruments. In total, they suggested 95 ideas for improvement!

Lessons learned: Only six of the eleven nurses had post-training scores indicating an “adequate” knowledge of IC, so the IC team plans a refresher course later in the year. The team realized the importance of establishing an organizational culture that values infection control; otherwise sites would be unlikely to institute practices or continue to purchase hand hygiene supplies. To help reinforce and review expected practices, nurse supervisors will be asked to complete a checklist after facility visits to note infection control issues. “Infection Control” has been added to the nurse supervisor’s biannual meeting agenda so challenges and successes can be reported and discussed. The IFIC Working Group of Safe Childbirth congratulates the team for steps they have taken and thanks Covidien once again for their commitment to make motherhood safer in our lifetime.