Informed Decisions for Actions in Maternal and Newborn Health

2010–17 Report

What works, why and how in maternal and newborn health
Back in 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle developed a new strategy for the coming years, outlining how they might achieve their long-term aim of fewer maternal and child deaths in Nigeria, Ethiopia and the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. They chose to focus on these settings for two reasons: firstly, the alarmingly high death rate among mothers and children, largely due to preventable causes, and secondly, the very high numbers of mothers and children. Uttar Pradesh, for example, has over 200 million people, making it comparable to Brazil which is the fifth largest country in the world.

In 2010, the foundation approached the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine with a request to support the measurement, learning and evaluation of their new maternal and child health strategy. The IDEAS project was developed to respond to this request.

Since 2010, the IDEAS team have worked closely with collaborators in north-east Nigeria, Ethiopia, and India to improve understanding of “what works, why and how” in these settings for maternal and newborn health. This report outlines their approach, giving highlights of the work. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Professor Betty Kirkwood, Professor Sir Andy Haines, Professor Dame Anne Mills, Professor Kara Hanson and Professor Simon Cousens
IDEAS Strategic Management Group
2010–17
IDEAS is a measurement, learning and evaluation project based at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). The project aims to find out “what works, why, and how” for maternal and newborn health in three low-resource settings in Nigeria, India, and Ethiopia. The IDEAS team includes 20 research and professional support staff, living in Abuja, Addis Ababa, London, and New Delhi, who have been working since 2010 with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (the foundation) and with the foundation’s implementation partners.

The project started with the launch of a Technical Resource Centre to support implementation partners in Ethiopia, India and Nigeria with their own measurement, learning and evaluation. Between 2010 and 2017, nearly 80 technical support activities were completed, including reviews of research protocols and cross-country learning workshops.

IDEAS research was based on four learning questions, with an underlying theory of change. Firstly, what foundation-funded innovations were implemented and how were they expected to improve maternal and newborn health. Our second learning question was to find whether innovations enhanced interactions between families and frontline workers and increased the coverage of life-saving interventions, and if so then how and at what cost. Thirdly, we studied how and why scale-up happens. And lastly, we studied the extent to which scaled-up innovations affect coverage of life-saving interventions. We worked with measurement, learning and evaluation partners in Nigeria, India and Ethiopia.

We found 57 diverse innovations, put in place by 9 implementation partners. We developed a structured approach to “characterise” these innovations, describing them by what they aimed to enhance, such as community awareness or front-line worker capacity. We repeated this on an annual basis.

Our work on the extent to which the innovations enhanced interactions between families and frontline workers and increased life-saving intervention coverage started in 2012. We conducted a baseline survey, in specific areas of each country, of households and resident women with a recent birth, primary health facilities, and frontline health workers; and we repeated these surveys in 2015. The results showed some important gains in care provided, although in all three settings newborn health indicators showed the least improvement.

We used qualitative methods to explore how frontline health workers influenced the place of delivery and newborn care practices.

In Ethiopia, we found that factors driving changes in newborn care practices in the community included saturation of messages, increased knowledge, and a desire to be modern. To understand how and why scale-up happens, we conducted 221 in-depth interviews and investigated three case-studies of successfully scaled innovations. We identified six critical actions that implementation partners adopted to catalyse innovation scale-up: design for scalability; building up evidence; harnessing the power of individuals; being prepared and responsive; ensuring continuity; and embracing good effectiveness principles.

To study the extent to which scaled-up innovations affect coverage of life-saving interventions, we evaluated the scale-up of community-based newborn care in Ethiopia by studying changes in intervention and comparison areas using surveys and qualitative enquiry. In India, we developed a novel method with an in-built process for assessing the implementation strength of scaled-up innovations, the Data-Informed Platform for Health. Project outputs include 17 data sets, 27 reports, 19 journal articles, 10 research briefs, and 5 infographics.

From 2017, a second phase includes tracking progress in coverage of life-saving interventions; support to local use of data in decision-making; research on improving coverage measurement and on understanding mechanisms underlying quality-improvement; and a study of sustainability.
Partnerships

Partnerships are essential to the IDEAS project and approach. This section highlights some of the key players.

IDEAS Programme Officers at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

John Grove  Win Brown  Phillip Setel  Saul Morris

IDEAS has pioneered measuring, with greater clarity, the complicated and essential services and quality of care women and children should receive in a way that will inform how the rest of the world will do this in future.

– John Grove, Deputy Director, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health

Measurement, Learning and Evaluation partners

Nigeria
ChildCare and Wellness Clinics
ChildCare and Wellness Clinics is a healthcare service delivery organisation conducting quantitative and qualitative research, working in collaboration with researchers with practical field based expertise and tested research and data collection skills.

JaRco Consulting
JaRco Consulting PLC is an international development consultancy firm based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with a mission to ensure that programmes aimed at improving the lives of the most vulnerable groups around the world are of the highest quality.

Sambodhi Research & Communications Pvt. Ltd.
Sambodhi Research & Communications Pvt. Ltd. is a leading research and advisory consultancy based in New Delhi, India, providing services and technical support in areas including health, poverty, education and forestry.

India
Health Hub
Health Hub is a consultancy in Nigeria that offered a wide variety of consulting services, ranging from public health to information technology, and management infrastructure, with a mission to provide and support management and technological solutions that serve to improve health care systems; subsequently, improving access to adequate healthcare for all citizens.

The Public Health Foundation of India
The Public Health Foundation of India is a public-private initiative whose mission is to strengthen India’s public health institutional and systems capability and provide knowledge to achieve better health outcomes for all.

The Maternal and Newborn Health Community Mobilization Project
The Maternal and Newborn Health Community Mobilization Project aimed to develop and scale-up a package of family health innovations through self-help groups in Uttar Pradesh State, India.

Manthan
Manthan provided technical assistance to the Government of Uttar Pradesh, India, to implement evidence-based maternal and newborn health interventions, such as mSakhi, a mobile phone application to assist frontline workers.

Sure Start
PATH’s Sure Start project reached 24.5 million people with essential maternal and newborn health interventions in India’s two most populous states, Uttar Pradesh and Maharsraht.

Society for Family Health
Society for Family Health works with the private and public sectors, adopting social marketing and behaviour change communication to improve access to essential health information, services, and products to motivate the adoption of healthy behaviours.

Saving Newborn Lives
Saving Newborn Lives aims to reduce global neonatal mortality through effective, evidence-based newborn care innovation packages implemented at scale.

The Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia Partnership
The Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia Partnership implemented an initiative to demonstrate a community-oriented model for improving maternal and newborn health care in rural Ethiopia.

Additional partners
The IDEAS project also collaborated with Paolo Patruno Photography in Ethiopia; IMPACT Partners in Social Development in India; and Yared Amare in Ethiopia.
The Technical Resource Centre (TRC) aimed to support measurement, learning and evaluation among the foundation’s implementation partners in maternal and newborn health in Ethiopia, Nigeria and India.

We launched the TRC at learning workshops in each country where implementers met to identify areas of potential synergy and learn from one another. Almost 80 technical support activities initiated by grantees were completed between 2010 and 2017. We organised annual learning workshops, webinars on relevant MNH topics and updates on the latest academic papers.

Initial meetings with each implementation partner identified areas where support would be welcome. These included measurement, learning and evaluation systems enhancement, technical advice and individual capacity strengthening. Examples are given here.

**Measurement, learning and evaluation systems enhancement**
We mapped innovations onto a theory of change to describe how the project was expected to lead to higher uptake of life-saving evidence-based interventions, and thereby better health outcomes.

The mapping showed what needed to happen, where and at what scale. For two implementation partners, the mapping formed the basis of a focused measurement, learning and evaluation plan.

**Technical advice**
We reviewed protocols and advised on sample size calculations; supported indicator development to measure compliance with regulations for funding in Nigeria; and gave an overview of academic literature relevant to training community volunteers in India to inform programme design. In Nigeria, our regular research highlights were used by a community of practice.

In Ethiopia, we collaborated in research on front-line worker performance and perceptions of postnatal care, and a time-and-motion study on health extension workers’ workload. And in India, we collaborated in research on how a foundation-funded Technical Support Unit could best engage with the informal health care sector.

**Individual capacity strengthening**
We made LSHTM distance learning module materials available to partners, and provided geographic information systems courses in Nigeria and Ethiopia. We held paper-writing workshops, where first-authors from implementation partners were matched with LSHTM academic staff providing guidance on all aspects of paper-writing.

In the TRC in Ethiopia, Pact requested technical support to develop an evaluation plan for the complex SAQIP grant, which included phased implementation, multiple supply and demand side innovations, and institutional capacity building at state and local government area levels. IDEAS support also helped to characterise the innovations, leading to clarity about measurable indicators. When SAQIP evaluation was delayed, IDEAS included SAQIP indicators in IDEAS surveys, providing a no-cost baseline for the project and avoiding delays in implementation.

**Dissemination activity and impact**
Few projects formally document the impact of dissemination activities – perhaps because impacts often come after a project has ended. IDEAS documented the dissemination activity, output and impact of the foundation’s maternal, neonatal and child health implementation partners.

Dissemination was used for many purposes, from raising awareness and fostering a supportive working environment, to policy change and influencing the international maternal and newborn health agenda. Partners disseminated to local, regional, national and international audiences, and differentiated their activities by audience type: community, government, non-governmental organisation, donor and academic.

Partners appeared to be well embedded within national policy and advocacy networks, and had a detailed understanding of relevant stakeholders, partnerships and relationships. They reported research-related, policy, service and societal impacts, as categorised using the Research Impact Framework.

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3 State Accountability for Quality Improvement Project
4 www.phfi.org/component/content/article/1438
5 vanVijgel et al. BMC Health Services Research, 2006.
6 bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6963-6-134

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Contracts with many partners in many countries
by Anita Lyons

Negotiating contracts has its own challenges within a single country, but dealing with partners in several countries adds more complexity. In contrast to exciting and highly vocal research discussions, once terms and conditions start to be written down everyone involved can become edgy and keep their cards close to their chest. Words can get lost in translation and this causes frustration on both sides. Culture has an effect on negotiating styles in each country; being aware of local economic and political issues is also essential. We have learned that building relationships, gaining trust, using clear, simple and concise writing, as well as knowing the hierarchical structure for signing off contracts are all essential.

Communicate and make a difference
by Agnes Becker and Suzanne Welsh

A professional Communications Officer working closely with researchers helps to translate research into policy and practice and raise the profile of the research group.

IDEAS’ full-time Communications Officer enabled the research team to raise awareness both of the IDEAS project and of the implementing partners among new national and international audiences and strengthen relationships with the wider academic community.

For example, at the international level, improving the online presence through the website and Twitter inspired the team to connect with “Mom Bloggers for Social Good”, whose founder included the IDEAS project in the Huffington Post article (2014) ‘25 Leading Tweeters on Maternal Health’ and March of Dimes through participating in World Prematurity Day Twitter campaigns. At country level, a report of baseline findings and dissemination meetings with policy makers in Uttar Pradesh, India, resulted in the National Rural Health Mission Director issuing a directive to all health facilities with a reminder about the importance of delayed bathing of the newborn.

Context
by Tanya Marchant

Understanding the context of a health programme is important in interpreting evaluation findings and in considering the external validity for other settings. Through a structured, consultative process, IDEAS identified contextual factors and compiled evidence on them through desk reviews, secondary data extraction and key informant interviews. Collecting evidence on context was resource intensive. We were limited by data being unavailable for precise areas and time periods. However, the use of contextual evidence remained an important qualitative tool in the interpretation of findings.

Knowledge Summaries
by Bilal Avan

The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH) includes over 650 international organisations. PMNCH advocates key decision-makers worldwide to ensure that reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health is kept on the development agenda.

Knowledge Summaries are among PMNCH-branded products that support this advocacy work, and aim to synthesise scientific evidence in a concise format. During 2013–14, IDEAS was commissioned to produce seven Knowledge Summaries for PMNCH. We developed a systematic and standardised process, drawing on engagement with the global maternal, newborn and child health community. The Knowledge Summaries were circulated widely, and translated into other languages. We conducted evaluation research on the Knowledge Summaries to review their development process, find their reach and use, and consider how their relevance could be improved.

Harmonising indicators
by Tanya Marchant

Data are a powerful tool for performance management of programmes and the IDEAS project worked with partners to synthesise maternal and newborn evidence from diverse settings and over time.

Initially this activity was hampered by differences in partners’ indicator definitions. In the absence of global guidance for the measurement of maternal and newborn indicators, IDEAS reviewed multiple guidance documents and compiled a compendium of standardised indicator definitions from pregnancy to newborn periods. Working with partners to harmonise indicator definitions within existing measurement plans has enhanced the potential to track progress.

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7  www.pmnch.org
What are the innovations?
by Krystyna Makowiecka

The IDEAS project’s first learning question seems simple: describe 57 diverse innovations put in place by nine implementation partners working in India, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

We developed a structured and rigorous approach to this work, which we termed “characterising” the innovations. Working closely with each implementation partner, we started by developing a framework of basic questions about each innovation. We asked what innovations had been implemented, their purpose, geographical scope and timing; what changes in interactions between families and front-line workers were expected as a result; and in turn how life-saving intervention coverage was expected to change.

Using this framework we described all 57 implementation partner innovations, then collated the data for a bigger picture across all innovations. To capture changes over time, we repeated this on an annual basis.

We developed a typology for the innovations, classifying them first as focussed to the community or to front-line workers. Within these categories we further split innovations by what they aimed to enhance: awareness and positive actions in the community; community structures; front-line worker capacity or motivation; job-aids; infrastructure; or health systems operation. When collating the results for the bigger picture, we mapped innovations by type and by geography, showing their anticipated combined effect.

Figure: The table opposite shows innovations put in place by the Society for Family Health in Nigeria in 2013 and 2016, according to the typology and showing changes over time.

Innovations by the Society for Family Health in Nigeria in 2013 and 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation type</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community-focused</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness or behaviour change</td>
<td>- Mass media event</td>
<td>- Village Health Worker training, equipping and deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community structures</td>
<td>- Emergency Transport Scheme</td>
<td>- Village Health Worker training and deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity-strengthening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>- Financial incentives</td>
<td>- Financial incentives for continuum of care including appropriate referral by Village Health Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-aids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>- Call Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational enhancement</td>
<td>- Map service users and providers</td>
<td>- Access to cheaper clean delivery kits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enhanced supply of clean delivery kits</td>
<td>- Village Health Worker linkage with facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Innovation Community-based approach to enhancing health, new to the context

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...we mapped innovations by type and by geography, showing their anticipated combined effect.
Do innovations enhance interactions and increase life-saving intervention coverage? If so, how and at what cost?

by Tanya Marchant

IDEAS’ work on interactions between families and frontline workers and coverage of life-saving interventions for mothers and newborns was conducted between 2012 and 2015. This research was done in areas where foundation-funded implementation partners were working in Ethiopia, Nigeria and India. Specifically, in Ethiopia, this was in the four regions where John Snow Inc.’s L10K project was working; in Gombe State, Nigeria, where a Society for Family Health project was implemented, and in Uttar Pradesh, India, in six districts where the Uttar Pradesh Community Mobilization Project was operating.

In Gombe State, there was no evidence of change in the frequency of routine interactions between families and frontline workers with 60% of women having at least one antenatal care visit, 29% delivering in a health facility, and 7% reporting a postnatal visit for their newborn. The content of routine antenatal care improved, as did some targeted life-saving interventions that relied on behaviour change by carers. For example, clean cord care increased from 28% (20–36) to 46% (42–50), and delayed bathing increased from 11% (7–15) to 21% (17–26). However, there was no evidence that the quality of delivery or postnatal care improved. Inequities in access persisted, with women in the poorest households consistently having the poorest health care.

In the six districts of Uttar Pradesh coverage of at least one antenatal care visit with a skilled provider increased from 63% (57–68) to 76% (73–79), and coverage of facility delivery was already high in the study area, at 76% in 2012 and 81% in 2015. Postnatal care for the mother within two days of birth increased from 54% (48–59) to 63% (58–67), but postnatal care for the newborn remained low, at 16% in 2015. Some interventions were already reported to have almost universal coverage in 2012 (for example hand washing with soap and use of gloves by birth attendants), while clean cord care and initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth remained constant at approximately 50%. There was evidence of a change in behaviour for immediate drying of the newborn from 0% in 2012 to 15% of in 2015.

Overall, these results demonstrated some important gains across focus geographies in the care provided to mothers and newborns. However, a consistent finding in all three settings was that newborn health indicators showed the least improvement. Addressing newborn health issues is an urgent priority.

Q2. Do innovations enhance interactions and increase life saving intervention coverage? If so, how and at what cost?
How does change happen?
by Zelee Hill

Using qualitative methods, we explored how front-line health workers influenced the place of delivery and newborn care practices. In Ethiopia, we found that changes in newborn care practices were driven by:

- Increased knowledge: community health worker networks allowed message penetration
- Saturation of messages: advice came from multiple sources increasing credibility and coverage
- Wanting to be modern: behaviours were new and viewed as modern. Traditional practices were considered outdated, harmful and undesirable
- Trust and power dynamics: families trusted the advice and felt they should obey the front-line health worker. Knowing the benefits of a behaviour was not necessary for behaviour change.
- Improved efficacy: increased knowledge gave families the power to oppose contrary views
- Increased facility deliveries: facilities were an important source of information, and were responsible for carrying out behaviours such as wrapping the baby and early breast-feeding.

Economic model
by Lindsay Mangham-Jeffries and Joanna Schellenberg

We developed a generic economic model that can be used to simulate the cost-effectiveness of community-based innovations to improve maternal and newborn health.

The aim of the model is to produce a tool that can be used to estimate cost-effectiveness of wide-ranging innovations and inform funding decisions by identifying priorities for future investment.

Inequities
by Tanya Marchant

Community-based innovations were designed to be pro-poor, with no family left behind.

We did an equity analysis of the change in coverage for a sub-set of nine indicators assessed in all three geographies. Where changes did occur these were almost exclusively equitable: change was observed for all socio-economic groups. However, coverage was no higher for the poorest than the least poor in either survey.

Sample sizes
by Elizabeth Allen

IDEAS provided interesting insights into the complexities of sample size estimation in this context. The difference-in-differences approach to evaluating change that may be attributed to innovations, above and beyond any temporal changes occurring in the setting, was limited by large scale changes to programme delivery in both intervention and comparison areas – either by government or other actors.

Such shifts had important implications for the adequacy of sample size calculations that were based on pre-specified differences between intervention and comparison areas with design effects used to account for clustering. However, many analyses were based around difference within clusters and, whilst allowing for correlation with baseline measures in sample size calculations for studies conducted at an individual level is common, there is scope for further exploring how to incorporate repeated measures at a cluster level into sample size calculations. Allowing for these correlations when estimating sample sizes would provide additional power and enable the detection of smaller effects, which would mitigate the limitations outlined above.

Bridging gaps in measurement for maternal and newborn health
by Tanya Marchant

Throughout IDEAS, important gaps in measurement approaches for maternal and newborn health became clear. One area developed by IDEAS was to add dimensions of quality of care to measures of contacts with health services, to generate the effective coverage of contacts. Adding content to contacts can present a more accurate picture of the potential for health gain currently being achieved, and help to identify bottlenecks in the provision of high quality, life-saving care. Improving measurement approaches is a core component of the IDEAS Phase II grant.
How and why does scale-up happen?

by Neil Spicer

We asked what actions help, as well as the contextual factors that influence, efforts to catalyse the scale-up of donor-funded maternal and newborn health innovations. Two rounds of qualitative, in-depth interviews enabled us to explore these questions: 160 in 2012–13 and 71 in 2014–15 with government officials, implementers, development partners and community health workers. Findings from the first round are published in peer-reviewed journal articles.11

For our second round, we selected three successfully scaled innovations as case studies:

- mSehat in Uttar Pradesh: a smart phone ‘app’ for community health workers implemented in five districts by a state government-funded partnership, influenced by foundation-funded implementation partners.
- Emergency Transport Scheme in Adamawa, northeast Nigeria: a foundation-funded innovation to incentivise taxi drivers to transport women to facilities for childbirth in Gombe State that was scaled to Adamawa with funding from the UK charity Comic Relief.
- Newborn sepsis case-management in Ethiopia: an innovation allowing community health workers to administer antibiotics to newborns, scaled as part of the government’s flagship Community-Based Newborn Care programme.

Based on these case studies we identified six critical actions that foundation-funded implementation partners adopted to catalyse innovation scale-up:

1. Designed for scalability. The innovations were effective, with observable effects and impacts; simple, being easily used by health workers and requiring low financial and human resource inputs; acceptable culturally, met health workers’ needs, and adaptable across diverse geographic contexts; and aligned, in that they fitted with and built on country health policies and systems.

2. Built up evidence. The implementers generated multiple forms of evidence including quantitative impact data, qualitative operational lessons and synthesising secondary evidence which informed government decisions about scale-up and offered valuable lessons on how to implement innovations at scale.

3. Harnessed the power of individuals. The implementers had the backing of well-connected government officials and development partners who were instrumental to scale-up.

4. Prepared and responsive. The implementers assessed policy, health systems and sociocultural contexts to prepare for scale-up. They were also responsive to policy change, and waited to act until there was political support and health systems readiness.

5. Ensured continuity. The implementers supported governments in the transition to scale through contributing to developing and implementing the scaled innovations; contributing operational evidence and project resources; and harnessing the experience of project staff.

6. Embraced aid effectiveness principles. The implementers ensured that their innovations had strong country ownership; that their work aligned with country priorities, programmes and targets; and there was strong harmonisation with other implementers and donors including synchronising communication with government and exchanging learning.

We recommend that donors, including the foundation:

1. Support implementers to generate strong evidence to assist government decision making and implementation at scale.

2. Incentivise and support implementers to integrate scale-up within their project plans, while allowing flexibility to respond to policy change.

3. Enable implementers to assist government through the transition period.

4. Embrace government-led donor coordination mechanisms to foster country ownership, alignment and harmonisation.

Aid effectiveness

by Deepthi Wickremasinghe

The internationally agreed aid effectiveness principles can help to create a suitable environment for scaling up maternal and newborn health innovations. These principles include government ownership of externally funded innovations, aligning innovations with national health policies and priorities, coordinating donor and implementer activities and encouraging trust, through sharing information between stakeholders and creating transparency and accountability.

Social network analysis

by Kate Sabot

Professional advice networks could be used to improve front-line health worker practices. We used social network analysis to study professional advice networks of 160 healthcare workers in eight primary health care units across four regions of Ethiopia.

We found that there were informal, inter- and intra-cadre advice networks, with varying degrees of utilisation. Advice networks for antenatal or maternity care were used more than advice networks for postnatal or newborn care (see figure below).

Maternity Care Advice Exchange

Postnatal Care Advice Exchange

Legend

Position + Facility

Shape Size = years of experience

Colour = Cadre

Red = Nurse

Blue = Health Extension Worker

Green = Female

White = Male

Q3. How and why does scale up happen?

Scale-up

An innovation is increased in reach to benefit a greater number of people over a wider area.
To what extent do scaled-up innovations affect coverage of life-saving interventions and survival?

by Bilal Avan

Initially, we were interested in understanding the use of evidence-based, collaborative decision-making for innovations to be implemented sustainably at the district level.

Through exploratory research in Ethiopia, Nigeria and India, we found multiple and diverse health stakeholders at the district level were lacking formal coordination; that although the information system is pivotal to service improvement, it lacks connectedness; and that uncertainty usually prevails at the district level, diminishing the confidence of district health administrators to engage in formal decision-making and planning. 13

Evaluation of community-based newborn care in Ethiopia

by Della Berhanu

Foundation-funded research 15 showed that in a few districts of Ethiopia, front-line health workers could identify and treat newborns with signs of possible severe bacterial infection using antibiotics. In 2014 this evidence contributed to scaling up the approach through the Government’s Community Based Newborn Care programme (CBNC).

IDEAS evaluation, requested by the Ministry of Health, will estimate the effect of the programme on coverage of life saving interventions. A 2013 baseline survey included household, health worker and facility level assessments. A 2015 midline quality of care assessment used novel methods to assess quality, including observation of community health worker consultations for sick young infants, followed by re-examination. An endline survey is scheduled for late 2017.

We conducted a systematic literature review, 12 and found limited and sketchy evidence of the use of health data for decision-making at the district level in low and middle income countries, and that no standardised processes or structured tools were available to facilitate decision-making. Scaling up an innovation is usually an organic process rather than being pre-defined. We developed the “implementation pathway” approach which showed how a specific innovation is implemented in the broader contexts of the implementation partner project, the health system and the socio-cultural background. The pathway analysis (see the figure on page 23) provided a structured layout of components to describe an innovation from execution to the end-user, and how this links to coverage of evidence-based, life-saving interventions and health outcomes.

We used both conventional and novel methods to study the extent to which scaled-up innovations affect coverage of life-saving interventions. In Ethiopia, we used a conventional approach to evaluate the scale-up of community-based newborn care by studying changes in intervention and comparison areas through surveys and qualitative enquiry (see panel). In India, we developed a novel method in the form of the Data Informed Platform for Health (DIPH), which has an in-built process for assessing the implementation strength of scaled-up innovations (see panel). These two strands of research are ongoing in the second phase of IDEAS, from 2017.

12  Note that IDEAS studies were not designed to assess the relationship between scaled-up innovations and survival empirically.
15  Community-Based Intervention for Newborns (COMBINE) study, led by Save the Children.
Data-Informed Platform for Health
by Bilal Avan

The ‘Data-Informed Platform for Health’ (DIPH) guides coordination using a framework: bringing together key district-level data from public and private health sectors on inputs and processes that could influence maternal and newborn health. The concept has its roots in the ‘National Evaluation Platform’ approach. The dual aims are to facilitate the use of local data from existing programmatic activities in decision-making, priority-setting and planning at the district level; and to promote the role of such data in appraising health services and programmes, comparing implementation strength across districts, and between the district and state levels.

The DIPH approach brings government and non-government service providers to a common forum on a regular basis, sharing data in a systematic way. Quarterly cycles are based on a series of structured interactions among core team members, following five steps (see figure). We developed a digital app which includes job-aids, guides and training material. A prototype phase in three districts of West Bengal State, India started in early 2016. By the end of 2017 we expect to start scale-up through the state of West Bengal, and to begin adaptation in selected districts in Ethiopia.

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**Steps of a DIPH cycle**

1. Assess
2. Engage
3. Organise
4. Action
5. Follow-up

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**Implementation pathway of Nurse Mentor innovation**

**Uttar Pradesh**

**Implementation Path**

- Initiation of Nurse Mentor Innovation in 100 blocks across 25 districts of Uttar Pradesh

**Implementation Linkages**

- 1.1 NGO: Developed implementation package
- 1.2 GOVT: NGO collaboration in design phase
- 1.3 GOVT: Permissions and procedural facilitation

**Context**

- 1.0 Need to improve coverage and quality of maternal and newborn care services at primary & secondary care level
- 2.0 Non-adherence to protocols and guidelines at facilities, poor data recording and maintenance
- 3.0 No mentoring cadre existing in the facilities to improve the skills of nurses in delivery care
- 4.0 Staff nurses and Auxiliary Nurse Mentors conducting deliveries at health facilities in Uttar Pradesh require knowledge and skills in assessment, identification & management of complications and data recording
- 5.0 Facilities do not provide the armage of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child health and adolescent health services

**Intended outcome:** Improved quality of Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child Health + Adolescents services at facilities

**Intended Impact:** Reduced maternal and neonatal mortality

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**Implementation strength**

by Joanna Schellenberg

In a published paper, we reviewed the role of implementation strength in the evaluation of strategies for evidence-based, low-cost interventions to reach those in need, exploring the association between implementation strength and public health gains.

The paper used examples of implementation strength in evaluation in low-income settings, which each involved large-scale implementation, addressed important public health topics, and used designs without comparison areas. We conclude that implementation strength can strengthen pragmatic impact evaluation, and outline five key aspects of developing an implementation strength measure.

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The IDEAS project aims to improve the health and survival of mothers and babies through generating evidence to inform policy and practice. Working in Ethiopia, north-east Nigeria and the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, IDEAS uses measurement, learning and evaluation to find out what works, why and how in maternal and newborn health programmes.