This Thailand-based network is a platform for sharing and exchanging good practices among countries faced with high maternal mortality ratios (MMRs). Coordinated by the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) as key implementor, the network involves several leading nursing and midwifery institutions, among them, the Faculties of Nursing and Midwifery of Chiang Mai University, Khon Kaen University, Prince of Songkla University; the School of Nursing and Midwifery of Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University and Thailand’s Ministry of Public Health.

CONTEXT

For decades, Thailand's rich experience in reproductive health, especially in maternal health, has been highly recognized. The current MMR of Thailand is 21 per 100,000 live births, a significant achievement relative to the global goal of reducing MMR to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Many developing countries with high MMR recognize Thailand as a great source of good practices and knowledge that can benefit other countries.

Courses were assigned to Thai institutions specializing in maternal health and newborn care. More than 500 participants, including doctors, nurses and policy makers, from countries with high MMR have benefitted from these offerings. The course offerings have been reviewed and vetted by leading Thai institutions as well as by UNFPA. Actual offerings of these international courses are held under the purview of the Bureau of Health and Workforce Development of Thailand’s Ministry of Public Health. The training methodologies, mainly developed using institutional technology, are aligned with international standards.
PROGRAMME APPROACH

The Thailand SSC Solution Hub was designed to improve the capacity of Thailand's institutions to address the SDG challenge to end preventable maternal deaths. Through a network of pre-qualified institutions, officially recognized in 2018, the initiative aimed to (1) improve the quality of learning and practices among Thai institutions, (2) provide technical assistance to countries in need and (3) join the initiative with the TICA and UNFPA to support priority countries with high MMRs.

The current international courses also benefited from a survey in 2016 undertaken by TICA and UNFPA that reviewed the applications of Thailand-based experiences and knowledge. Feedback from respondents related to the relevance of the knowledge and experience to the context and demands of participating countries. Some observed that the offerings were too academic, too technological and difficult to apply, and suggested that the programme be based more on existing capacities of countries. These review feedback and solutions gathered were shared with Thai institutions through consultative meetings aimed at improving the quality of the knowledge exchanged with other countries.

Since its establishment, the network has benefited 48 participants from 12 countries. The first international “South–South Cooperation Solution on Preventable Causes of Maternal Death Workshop” was organized in November 2018 to provide opportunities for high MMR countries and Thailand to exchange maternal health-specific knowledge and set up technical collaborations. Sixty participants from 12 countries attended and exchanged knowledge through case presentations and discussions; bilateral consultation on maternal health issues; innovations for making motherhood safer; and aligning maternal health and midwifery education with the ICM-WHO standards.

An internationally experienced consultant with a midwifery background was recruited to assess the quality and standard of the existing maternal health courses and institutional capacities in alignment with ICM-WHO standards. Recommendations were provided to improve course quality and learning methodology which have subsequently been adjusted to be more participatory and adaptable to different country contexts. This approach also strengthened the roles of TICA and UNFPA in management and coordination of this hub. The Thailand Network on Safe Motherhood was among the Thai institutions established, with full support from the UNFPA. The selection criteria for participants have been reviewed and revised to ensure that the right candidates are selected. The monitoring of participants after they return home was also strengthened to ensure that their knowledge applications yield maximum benefit.

Three Thailand-based good practices were selected as good solutions for preventing maternal deaths: (1) community involvement in a maternal health programme by Chiang Mai University, (2) a fast-track model to reduce preventable maternal deaths by Khon Kaen University and (3) a nurse and midwifery quality assurance policy from the Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Association. All partners agreed to share tasks and contribute resources.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 situation, an interactive online platform has been developed to enable virtual participation by institutions. COVID-19 has also been included in the course content as one of the preventable maternal death conditions. The Thailand SSC Solution Hub has been well recognized in the region, as well as globally, and the networking remains active among countries with high MMRs.

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