

SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA GWENT HEALTH LINK

REPORT OF VISIT

Name: Jane Hervé

Date of visit: 5-11 November 2011

Personal background and role in the Link

I have been involved with the Link for 5 years and this was my fourth visit to Ethiopia. I am an experienced midwife and am currently employed as the Head of Midwifery and Directorate Lead Nurse within Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. I have a teaching qualification and was involved with ALSO for a number of years; both are useful for my work with the Link in Ethiopia.

Specific role/contribution to the work in this visit

I was involved in the Train the Trainers course for the first three days of our training programme based in the Hawassa Referral Hospital and then led the CME course for the Midwives.

This year we organised the training using a slightly different format to ensure we emphasised the importance of training and education of midwives, other health workers and pregnant women. Sixteen midwifery teachers from 8 different colleges and universities attended the first two and a half days and they were a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic group who were keen to develop their teaching styles. We had some interesting discussions and much fun.

An overriding impression of all four midwifery trainers from the Link was that the education of midwives had changed much since we first visited Ethiopia. The teachers were already using different methods of teaching i.e. group discussion and more interactive sessions which was a method adopted by the Head of Midwifery and a Consultant Paediatrician from Hawassa, both using group work and feedback rather than stand and lecture for one and half hours. The midwives and teachers all said how much they had enjoyed the sessions and the group from the Link were very impressed and learned about HIV and managing neonatal complications in the Ethiopian health services.

The Midwives from different Health Centres joined on the third day and as usual they were initially very quiet and reserved. One exercise we did with both groups was to ask them to consider their individual hopes and fears about the course, then share them in a pair and then with their small group. This was useful both as an ice breaker but also as we could discuss the issues raised and ensure we made provision to address any concerns they had. One related to the language barrier, which reassured us that the approach we were going to use with the teachers and midwives sitting at each table would work as the teachers could translate as necessary into Amharic. On the last day we reviewed the hopes and fears of both

groups and were reassured by everyone on the course that we had addressed all their issues during the six days.

As usual, the role play of a woman in labour caused much hilarity but the key messages were fundamental within the session. These included maintaining normality, preserving the woman's dignity, offering support both from the midwife and her family and encouraging the woman to adopt different positions. We realise these messages can be very difficult for midwives in practice as the culture in health centres is for women to give birth alone without the support of their close family. However, we were encouraged that some midwives were receptive to change and to hear stories from some of the teachers and midwives that women were able to adopt different positions, so we hope in some small way the Link midwives are making a difference.

The end of the course was very hectic with the evaluations, post course assessments and the presentation of the certificates and equipment. However, it is a vital element of the course to ensure that the participants have learned there is evidence of partnership working between the Link and the College in Hawassa and to celebrate the end of a successful course.

This visit was very different from previous courses as Biku Ghosh agreed that my niece could accompany us on the visit. The purpose of her trip was as a result of a request for her to work with me as part of her work experience requirements within her course at college. She had a very interesting and educational visit and although at times the stay was a challenge, everyone from the Link and all the Ethiopian midwives and teachers attending the course took her under their wing and ensured she was involved as appropriate. I have no doubt this will be a life changing experience for her and as we discussed a real privilege that has not been afforded her friends.

Personal objectives for the visit

My personal objectives include:

- Assisting and leading a robust teaching course and to ensure every participant learns, has fun and promises to take back the learning to their work environment.
- Supporting the Links objective to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals i.e. reducing maternal and infant mortality through education and training.

Outcomes of the visit and my work

My personal objectives were met through the train the trainer's course and the CME course.

Key impressions from the visit

Hawassa has continued to develop with so many new buildings and roads; however the traditions are still evident in all areas of the town with the stalls, small shops and the hustle and bustle of the town and the variety of traffic on the roads. The numbers of cars seem to increase with the poor horses and donkeys having to vie for position on the very busy streets.

The influences of the Link

Working with the Link affects each individual very differently, but my feelings relate to the need to ensure there is progress with the Millennium goals thus reducing maternal mortality rates. Women in Ethiopian society are so important and we must work together with the midwives so they realise the importance of their role in caring for and nurturing women.

Additional information

The traditional course dinner was held on the last evening and all the participants were invited to attend. We all had a very good night and once again had to try traditional Ethiopian dancing, despite all the efforts we all remain very poor at this very difficult form of dancing!

The visit included a number of eminent professionals from the UK and it was such an honour to be able to spend time with them both from a work and social perspective.

My plan this year is to present at a local community group to raise the profile of the Link and also to raise funds so that the work can continue into the future.

Jane Hervé
07 November 2011