EU Intervention in Health

First Caesarean Section Performed by National Staff in Gedo through an EU/DfID-funded project implemented by Trócaire

The 5 districts of Gedo where Trócaire supports health services have not had access to surgical services since 2009 when expatriate doctors were withdrawn from the area because of insecurity. This is a very serious issue in Somalia where the maternal mortality ratio is 1,400 per 100,000 live births. More than 95% of women are subjected to pharaonic circumcision, which places an additional risk to child bearing.

Women in Gedo have access to basic emergency obstetric services provided by local midwives. However, there was no access to comprehensive emergency obstetric care for women facing labour complications since expatriate doctors left. With the help of the community alternatives were identified.

The mother: "When I was told the labour is complicated and the baby was in distress, then, I realized my husband made the right decision that we go to the hospital I would like to say a big thank you to Trócaire staff and especially theatre and maternity staff"

The father: "I am very happy about the outcome of my baby and wife and I express a big thank you to Trócaire staff, I will never forget this day"

DHB Member/Elder: "If Salad and Abdi were not trained, this mother could have been sent to Mandera (Kenya) and more hours would have been wasted on the road which might have caused more distress to the mother and baby. Sometimes the border is closed after 6pm. The training has helped save a life and time"

Trocaire sent two qualified nurses, Salat and Abdi, from Luuq to the Tanzania Training Centre for International Health in Ifakara, Tanzania where they were trained in the skills needed to provide caesarean sections. Tanzania is one of 3 African countries where mid-level workers such as medical assistants and midwives are trained and deployed to perform emergency obstetric surgery.

The nurses were trained intensively for 3 months. Salat was able to carry out 80 supervised caesarean sections and Abdi was able to perform more than a 100 supervised anaesthetic procedures. Once they returned to Gedo, they supervised the rehabilitation of the operation theatre in Luuq and were provided with the appropriate equipment and drugs. The process was completed in September 2010.

On 3 October at 3 pm, Sahara Dagaane Maalim, a 25 year old woman resident in Luuq and in her first pregnancy went into labour and was admitted to hospital where her progress was monitored. By 6.30 the next morning it was clear that the labour had been prolonged and was not progressing well; the baby was big and the mother was very tired. The baby's heart rate was very fast indicating foetal distress. A decision was made by Salat to approach her family and seek permission for surgery.

The surgical team started the surgery at 9.15 am and completed it at 9.45 am. Abdi who had administered the spinal anaesthetic resuscitated the baby boy who weighed 3.9 Kg. Outside the theatre, the father, the District Health Board members and other staff members who had been waiting to see the outcome of this momentous event in Luuq celebrated this birth: their own community had now been able to offer this vital surgery and a young couple had been delivered of a healthy baby boy called Ayanle Abdullahi. The little boy was immunized before he and his mother were discharged from the hospital.

Surgical team during the caesarean section

Surgical team gowned and gloved

Abdi scrubbing for surgery

Baby Ayanle Abdullahi

Proud parents and Baby Ayanle Abdullahi

Salat and Abdi with Baby

DHB Chairman and Baby

Building with Operation Theatre after rehabilitation

Abdi standing outside Operation Theatre, Luuq

This first caesarean section performed by 2 qualified nurses from the community was an event for celebration in the entire community who commemorated this event with a big lunch. The community of Gedo who live in Eastleigh (Nairobi, Kenya) were also overjoyed and had a similar celebration in Eastleigh. The EU and other donors in Nairobi were also informed and rejoiced.