

# midwives4mothers charity Annual Report 2019

*Save lives, empower midwives!*



## Introduction

The midwives4mothers (m4m) charity (stichting) is an independent charity that was established by the Royal Dutch Association of Midwives (KNOV) in 2010. The main aim of midwives4mothers is to contribute towards strengthening the agency of midwives globally to enable them to provide quality midwifery care for women and their families. Growing scientific evidence shows that midwives play a key role in providing optimal quality sexual and reproductive healthcare through midwifery [1, 2].



The most foremost activity of m4m to reach her goal is through twinning. In a nutshell twinning is 'a cross-cultural reciprocal process where two groups of people work together to achieve joint goals' [7]. To establish a twinning project a reciprocal collaboration is facilitated between the KNOV and another organisations of midwives, guided and funded by m4m. In 2009-2012 this was with the Sierra Leone midwives (SLMA) [3,4] and from 2013-2017 a collaboration was initiated between the KNOV and the Moroccan association of Midwives (AMSF) [5]. Current projects are 'twinning up North' and 'South South twinning'. All these projects made use of the twinning method which entails that a group of up to fifteen midwives from two different contexts or cultures are linked one-to-one, as twins on the basis of equity, and a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and skills is established under the supervision of a multicultural team of twinning experts [6,7]. In this way midwives are supported to support each other and during the process they grow both professionally and personally [4-8]. In the last five years PhD research has explored the impact of this form of exchange. This research shows that when twinning takes into account the context and complexity of cross cultural learning, its positive impact on the agency of midwives is promising. A PhD thesis presenting the results of five years of research into twinning can be found here:

<https://www.gildeprint.nl/case/twinning-a-promising-dynamic-process-to-strengthen-the-agency-of-midwives/> .

## Current twinning projects

The *twinning up North* and *South South twinning* projects were deliberately chosen as a result of lessons learned from previous twinning projects. Outcomes from both research into twinning as well as former twinning project evaluations led to new insights into the factors that lead to successful twinning and resulted in the choice of the two current twinning projects [6]. The four main lessons learned to facilitate successful twinning are to:

- ✓ choose projects between organisations with a perceived smaller contextual and/or cultural difference,
- ✓ keep a strong focus on common goals directly related to midwifery care,
- ✓ implementing strategies to keep the momentum going
- ✓ choose a realistic project duration that keeps participants engaged.

Both current projects were developed with the use of the Critical success factors developed in a Delphi study on successful twinning [9].

## South South twinning A 'successful failure'.

**Goal:** To enhance the leadership capacity of the Sierra Leone Midwives Association (SLMA) and Ghana Registered Midwives Association (GRMA) to lead their midwives in providing quality midwifery care in Ghana and Sierra Leone.



In this two year twinning project the president plus an active member of GRMA and SLMA were coupled as twins and supported by midwife experts from the Dutch and Swedish midwives Association to take the lead in professionalising their respective midwife associations to enable them to take the lead for midwifery in their respective countries.

This project was managed in stages of 6 month phases, with a *go/no-go* attached to the transition to the next 6 month phase. Phase one and two of *South South twinning* were completed successfully in 2018. The project was terminated at the end of

phase three in 2019. The *go/no-go* was determined unanimously and guided by pre-agreed commitments signed by all midwife associations involved in phase one. The achievements of this project for 2019 are shown in the table below.

Activity phase 3	Result phase 3	Comment
Prepare workshop in Freetown April (Agenda, travel, accomm., site visits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Joint agenda set.</li> <li>✓ Workshop logistics Freetown completed.</li> <li>✓ Stakeholder visits planned by SLMA.</li> <li>✓ Swedish midwife introduced to strengthen team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Challenges: pro-active communication specifically from Sierra Leone leadership.</li> </ul>
Workshop 4-8 April in Freetown, Sierra Leone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Workshop on effective communication held.</li> <li>✓ Successful stakeholder visits to Ministry of Health, WHO &amp; UNFPA.</li> <li>✓ Assessment of incomplete products.</li> <li>✓ Agreement made for needed changes if project is to go ahead.</li> <li>✓ Agreement signed &amp; communiqué written to inform partners about steps to be taken for project to continue. (UNFPA/WHO/MOH).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Challenges: no proactivity on SL side. No ability on GRMA side to activate process.</li> </ul>
May & June - evaluation of progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ One electronic meeting held, team not complete, no decision.</li> <li>✓ No clarity as to intention SLMA: Agreed AGM not yet held. Agreed leadership workshop not yet held.</li> <li>✓ Face to face meeting GRMA (Namibia ICM) to asses process: GRMA see no possibility ability to initiate change.</li> <li>✓ Joint year calendar for SLMA &amp; GRMA completed and distributed by GRMA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Challenges: little to no contact by SLMA despite communication attempts by KNOV, GRMA and Swedish midwives.</li> </ul>
Activity phase 4	Result phase 4	comment
July Project set 'on hold'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ No further activities developed.</li> <li>✓ No communication from SLMA &amp; agreed communication and activities not completed.</li> </ul>	Awaiting results of agreed activities by SLMA to change 'hold' to either 'go' or no-go'

December-assessment of situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Joint conclusion: Sierra Leone not ready to twin at this moment in time.</li> <li>✓ GRMA will look for other twinning possibilities supported by Sweden.</li> <li>✓ KNOV officially stops <i>South South twinning</i> activities.</li> </ul>	Twinning project officially terminated after joint electronic meeting by complete twinning team in December.
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A combination of factors, mainly to do with timing and the ability to invest, lead to an excellent learning experience for all involved and the joint decision to terminate this project after phase three. It may seem strange to present this result with pride. However, there is a time and a place for everything and to recognise challenges and then act upon these appropriately, even if it could mean ending a project is an indicator of leadership, which was precisely the goal of this twinning project.

### Twinning up North

**Goal:** To inspire and stimulate midwives from Iceland and the Netherlands to take the lead in generating positive change in their own work environment and be the example for their colleagues. And to exchange experiences and information between the two cultures with the aim to improving midwifery-led care in both countries.



This is the second year of the three year *twinning up North* project. This project was initiated because the Netherlands and Iceland both face issues of over-medicalisation of pregnancy and birth, also called “too much too soon” where the natural birth process is disturbed by early interventions. The increasing use of these unnecessary interventions leads to morbidity and negative birth experiences. Both can have long-term effects on women, their families and society. Although the midwifery model emphasises the natural physiological approach of pregnancy and childbirth, the rising fear of childbirth and negative media attention influence the decisions that women are making. Midwives have been activists in promoting and protecting women’s birth rights at a time when society is beginning to view pregnancy and birth as medicalised events instead of as natural physiological processes of life. There is an urgent need for midwives in leadership roles to address this issue. The

absence of role models and lack of leadership training in the areas of advocacy skills and media representation place limitations on midwives, their capabilities and their strengths.

During the twinning up North project fifteen twins, of similar backgrounds will be coupled (teachers to teachers, students to students, practising midwives to practising midwives etc.). These pairs will be supported to set up a project together and how to lead, lobby for and promote their project in order to achieve successful results. These skills are taught in a total of 8 interactive workshops that will be held throughout the three year project. The workshops are led by the project coordinators but will also include guest speakers and experts. Twins meet each other twice a year during exchanges in both countries. Commitment of twins will be encouraged by providing individual support, celebrating accomplishments, creating events and environments that give the twins inspiration for their projects.

The achievements of this project for 2019 are shown in the table below.

activities	result	comment
Workshop 4: aim cross-cultural collaboration and lobbying in own countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Workshop held</li> <li>✓ Guest speaker was inspirational</li> <li>✓ Final version of project plan twins and a go for all projects given.</li> </ul>	Challenges: Expectations about communication between twins need extra attention.
Attendance of the Nordic Midwifery Congress in Iceland with all twins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A boost to the motivation for the twins to continue working on their projects.</li> <li>✓ <i>Twinning up North</i> exhibited at congress in Reykjavik</li> <li>✓ Visit to the President and First Lady of Iceland by all twins.</li> </ul>	Challenges: Coaching twins on balancing professional and relational issues.
Workshop 5: aim exchange in Netherlands in October.  Compose midterm evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Midterm evaluation completed to send to the twins in November 2019.</li> <li>✓ Successful exchange.</li> <li>✓ Gained knowledge on rhetoric discussions</li> <li>✓ Evaluation of communication and personal development within the twinning group completed.</li> </ul>	Changes: Adjustments to budget due to non-inclusion of tax.



Overall the *twinning up North* project is progressing above expectation. The individual projects that are being developed by twins are inspirational and serve the goals of the project well. Issues common in twinning, such as the learning process of twins within a cultural context and learning to separate private and professional issues have made the dynamic twinning process this year a great success. Next year, 2020, will be the finalising year of this project.

## The m4m board

M4m has a voluntary Board chaired by Linda Rentes. The treasurer is George Miedema and secretary Noortje Jonker. The Board has worked on the establishment of new financial systems as well as a review of the collaboration agreement with the KNOV. There have been no changes

## Thank you for your support!

Thank you to all the midwife members of the KNOV who contributed €12 each this year. Thank you also to the support of the KNOV head office team for the enabling conditions to support our twinning work.  
<https://www.knov.nl/>



Thank you to Moeder voor Moeders (Aspen BV) for their financial contribution of €25,000 in 2019 for our twinning projects.  
<https://www.moedersvoormoeders.nl/over-ons/wie-is-moeders-voor-moeders/>



For the annual financial report please go to the m4m website [www.midwives4mothers.com](http://www.midwives4mothers.com)

On behalf of the m4m Board of,



Linda C. Rentes (chair m4m)

### References

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