

# KANGAROO MOTHER CARE IN ETHIOPIA

## OVERVIEW

Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) was first introduced in Ethiopia in 1996 at the Black Lion Hospital. Since then, KMC services have been expanded to other hospitals and health facilities at all levels. Recently, KMC was included in a series of policy documents issued by the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH)—the Newborn and Child Survival Strategy 2015–2020, the Health Sector Transformation Plan, and the National Healthcare Quality Strategy. The KMC target in these policies was set to reach 80% of preterm babies with KMC by the year 2020. Despite the emphasis that the government has put into reducing neonatal mortality by using evidence-based strategies such as KMC, the number of preterm/low birthweight (LBW) newborns initiated in KMC remains low.

**Table I. Status of KMC in Ethiopia by Strategic Area**

Domain	Prior to and during 2014	2015-2017
<b>Policy</b>		
National Health Policy	The MOH drafted a policy and plan to integrate KMC into the national coordination mechanism of newborn and child health care (MOH, 2014).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- KMC was integrated in the National Strategy for Newborn and Child Survival in Ethiopia for 2015/16–2019/20 (MOH, 2015) as part of the package of high-impact child survival interventions along the continuum of care.</li> <li>- KMC is also covered in the Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP), which aims to improve equity, coverage and utilization of health services, and improve quality of health care (MOH, 2015). Building on the HSTP, the Ethiopian National Healthcare Quality Strategy (MOH, 2015) was developed to improve the quality of prioritized interventions such as KMC.</li> </ul>
National Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first edition of the Standard Treatment Guidelines for district hospitals included an annex on KMC (DACA, 2004).</li> <li>- There are national guidelines about the care of preterm/LBW babies that include inpatient KMC. These guidelines were adopted from American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) manuals for newborn care.</li> </ul>	

<b>Country Support/Implementation</b>		
Levels and types of facilities implementing KMC	Black Lion Hospital started providing KMC services in 1996. KMC was later expanded to seven hospitals.	All teaching hospitals and most general hospitals in Ethiopia are expected to provide KMC services. However, KMC is provided at some tertiary, secondary, primary level facilities, and some private hospitals. Initiation of facility-based KMC remains low. Save the Children led an assessment between 2014 and 2015 about the delivery of KMC in six hospitals and nineteen health centers across three zones (East Shewa in Oromia Region, Sidama, and Gurage in SNNP Region). All six hospitals reported providing KMC services within the past three months of the assessment. However, only 14% of babies born at the surveyed hospitals who weighed less than 2000g were documented as enrolled into KMC, suggesting low levels of KMC initiation and identification of small newborns (Mathewos et al., 2016).
Percentage of LBW newborns initiated on facility-based KMC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- About 10–&lt;25% of preterm babies receive KMC in Ethiopia. This estimate is derived from an assessment that was conducted in two hospitals that were providing KMC services in Ethiopia. After training, these hospitals provided KMC services to 36% of preterm babies.</li> <li>- A KMC indicator has been included in the HMIS. It is expected that there will be national-level data about the preterm babies who are initiated in KMC.</li> </ul>
Funding		Funding for KMC is mostly provided by the MOH. There is need for partners to support KMC.
<b>Research</b>		
Major or program-based studies being conducted related to KMC currently		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WHO is leading a multi-country KMC implementation research study to determine effective models of delivery for KMC. The study is ongoing in four regions in Ethiopia and will eventually inform national scale-up of KMC.</li> <li>- Save the Children led a rapid assessment about availability and delivery of care to premature/LBW babies in three zones in Ethiopia (Mathewos et al., 2016).</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Management</b>		
Centers of excellence or state-of-the-art facilities for KMC/care of LBW babies	Black Lion Hospital has been advocating for KMC for the past 20 years.	Currently, no facilities have been nominated as centers of excellence for KMC, but Black Lion Hospital continues to lead KMC advocacy efforts.
KMC manuals, trainings, and campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In 2009, the KMC Trainee’s Manual was published (JSI, MOH, Save the Children, 2009).</li> <li>- The Newborn Care Training Participants Manual (MOH, 2012) recommended that all LBW babies below 2000g be referred to the nearest health</li> </ul>	In 2015/16 a training manual for care of preterm/LBW babies was developed.

	facility with KMC services or to a higher level of care.	
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>		
There (are/are not) KMC indicators included in the national HMIS		In 2017, a KMC indicator was included in the HMIS to calculate the proportion of preterm/LBW babies for whom KMC was initiated.
KMC data recorded at health facilities	Health facilities use the Integrated Supportive Supervision (ISS) checklist to report if they provide KMC services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Although admission to KMC services is included in the HMIS delivery register, KMC is not included on the reporting form and registers are often incomplete (Save the Children, 2016).</li> <li>- There is a quality self-assessment for facilities, which includes a KMC indicator.</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy</b>		
Professional organizations that endorse KMC	The Ethiopian Pediatric Society, which is the lead professional association on newborn health matters in Ethiopia, has endorsed KMC as a high-impact neonatal health intervention.	
Awareness campaigns		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In 2016, the MOH, regional health bureaus, and its partners raised awareness about KMC during World Prematurity Day under the motto “Kangaroo Mother Care is an Effective Method of Treating Premature Babies.”</li> <li>- Annually during the month of November, newborn care – including KMC – is promoted through mass media.</li> </ul>
Champions	Prof. Bogale Worku introduced KMC at the Black Lion Hospital.	Prof. Bogale Worku, considered a global expert in KMC, has contributed to evidence-based findings of KMC in Ethiopia.

**Table II. DHS Proxy Indicators for KMC**

<b>DHS Indicators Related to KMC (Ethiopia DHS, 2016)</b>		
<b>Identification of LBW babies</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Percent distribution of live births in the five years preceding the survey by mother’s estimate of baby’s size at birth, according to background characteristics.	<i>Very small</i>	16
	<i>Smaller than average</i>	10
Percentage of births that have a reported birthweight		13.6
Percentage of babies weighing less than 2.5 kg among births with a reported birthweight		13.2
<b>Initial Breastfeeding</b>		<b>Percent</b>
Percentage of children born in the two years preceding the survey who started breastfeeding within one hour of birth		73.3
Percentage of children born in the two years preceding the survey who started breastfeeding within one day of birth		91.9

Skin-to-Skin Contact	Percent
Percentage of births that have skin-to-skin contact among most recent live birth in the three years preceding the survey	24.3

## CHALLENGES

- There are some gaps in training, mentoring, providing support, and overall scale-up of KMC. Recently, the MOH and WHO released a call for proposals to identify efficient ways to scale up KMC in Ethiopia.
- KMC activities lack funding partly due to the belief that there are no costs involved. However, resources are needed to conduct training, purchase supplies, designate physical space for KMC in health facilities, and assign a nurse to the KMC space.
- There is a gap in terms of education and mentoring of healthcare providers, given that some providers perceive KMC as an inferior alternative to incubators.
- There is need to document the successes of KMC in Ethiopia.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Inclusion of KMC as a national target in the Health Sector Transformation Plan and in the National Strategy for Newborn and Child Survival has been critical in improving the availability and quality of KMC services in Ethiopia.
- Standardization of referral and follow-up of premature babies is important.

## FUTURE ACTIONS

- Include KMC in Integrated Systems Strengthening (ISS) supportive supervision checklist
- Adapt the job aids from WHO KMC implementation research sites to use for KMC scale up
- Ensure KMC is part of CME/CPD for MCH professional associations (EPS, ESOG, EMwA)
- Make sure KMC is adequately included during the revision process of MCH training materials such as (BEmONC, CEmONC, IMNCI, ICCM)
- Synthesize and use KMC data from the newly added HMIS data

## DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

Document Title	Link to Document
Standard Treatment Guidelines for District Hospitals First Edition (2004).	<a href="http://collections.infocollections.org/whocountry/en/d/Js6852e/12.4.html">http://collections.infocollections.org/whocountry/en/d/Js6852e/12.4.html</a>
Newborn and Child Survival Strategy Document Brief Summary 2015/16-2019/20 (2015).	<a href="http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/Child_Survival_Strategy.pdf">www.unicef.org/ethiopia/Child_Survival_Strategy.pdf</a>
Health Sector Transformation Plan (2015).	<a href="http://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=56efcc94cbd5c2c1930fae21&amp;assetKey=AS%3A342023027609601%401458556052424">www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=56efcc94cbd5c2c1930fae21&amp;assetKey=AS%3A342023027609601%401458556052424</a>
Ethiopian National Health Care Quality Strategy 2016-2020 (2015).	<a href="http://www.medbox.org/et-policies-others/ethiopian-national-health-care-quality-strategy-2016-2020/preview">www.medbox.org/et-policies-others/ethiopian-national-health-care-quality-strategy-2016-2020/preview</a>
Newborn Care Training Participants Manual (2012).	<a href="http://www.epseth.org/a/files/NBT%20manual%20Bogale%20august%202012.pdf">www.epseth.org/a/files/NBT%20manual%20Bogale%20august%202012.pdf</a>

Kangaroo mother care: a randomized controlled trial on effectiveness of early kangaroo mother care for the low birth weight infants in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2005).

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15840760](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15840760)

Rapid Health Facility Assessment on Service Availability and Delivery of Care to Premature and/or Low Birth Weight Babies (2016).

[www.healthynewbornnetwork.org/hnn-content/uploads/KMC\\_Facilities\\_Brief\\_.pdf](http://www.healthynewbornnetwork.org/hnn-content/uploads/KMC_Facilities_Brief_.pdf)

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5. Ministry of Health. (2015). Ethiopian National Health Care Quality Strategy 2016-2020. [www.medbox.org/et-policies-others/ethiopian-national-health-care-quality-strategy-2016-2020/preview](http://www.medbox.org/et-policies-others/ethiopian-national-health-care-quality-strategy-2016-2020/preview)
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