

# Enhancing maternal and newborn outcomes: a comprehensive evaluation of obstetric triage effectiveness and midwives training

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<b>Registration date</b> 04/11/2024	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 24/10/2025	<b>Condition category</b> Pregnancy and Childbirth	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Ghana has made considerable progress on key human capital indicators, such as reducing newborn and child death rates, and has seen a significant rise in institutional deliveries over the past decade. However, many hospitals still face shortages of critical resources needed to treat high-risk patients, while the growing workload negatively impacts the quality of care provided. In 2020, 23 out of every 1,000 live births resulted in the death of a child, and 5% of children still did not survive to their fifth birthday. In response, national efforts are currently focused on improving the quality of care in health facilities.

The need to build the capacity of healthcare providers is widely acknowledged. Given the common challenges of low adherence to best practices and the limited fiscal space in government budgets, officials are emphasizing the need to better utilize existing resources. Peer-to-peer learning, supervision, and support - through feedback and mentoring - are seen as essential for maintaining quality.

The Obstetric Triage Package (OTIP) is designed to address these needs. OTIP consists of a 1-week on-site training on clinical knowledge to quickly assess (in less than 10 minutes since arrival) and prioritize the care of pregnant women (using color-coded triage bands), with the goal of promptly and accurately identifying the severity of a patient's condition, determine the appropriate level of care, and ensure that those with the most critical needs receive immediate attention.

A key innovation of OTIP is the designation of up to ten midwives per hospital as 'Champions' - those selected to attend onsite training, and lead the implementation of a new protocol. These Champions are responsible for training their peers, as well as monitoring and motivating the adoption of the protocol among colleagues. These champions are also responsible for setting up and maintaining a triage room, as well as providing ongoing clinical coaching.

Pilot studies have demonstrated significant reductions in patient waiting times, highlighting the potential to improve both the efficiency and quality of service delivery, consistent with evidence from on-the-job training by more experienced or skilled workers in the education sector. However, the scalability of OTIP and its impact on maternal and child health outcomes remain uncertain. Conducting rigorous research on its implementation at scale is critical, as promising interventions often face challenges in scaling up.

Furthermore, the extent to which the champions play a role in the effectiveness of OTIP training has not been systematically studied, even when implementers have underscored their crucial role.

The aim of this study is to provide a rigorous evaluation of the OTIP Champions programme. The researchers will estimate the impacts of receiving the programme versus not receiving yet the programme, on maternal and newborn health, service quality and midwives' clinical knowledge and attitudes.

#### Who can participate?

Direct participants of the OTIP Champions programme are the midwives selected as Champions. Non-champion midwives can be surveyed if they are on permanent contracts in the maternity department, including those in charge of wards and clinics. Mothers selected for surveys will be those who delivered in the hospital within the last 2 months, primarily from labour wards, postnatal wards, and postnatal care clinics. This eligibility criteria implies that the sample of mothers at baseline will be different to that at endline.

#### What does the study involve?

This study will evaluate the impacts of the introduction of the OTIP Champions programme across high-volume hospitals in the final phase of its nationwide rollout. Hospitals are randomly allocated to receive OTIP either earlier (in September 2024) or later (in February 2025). The researchers will assess the impact of OTIP on the quality of service during labour and delivery, such as patient waiting times and the quality of obstetric assessment, as well as on newborn and maternal death rates and newborn health outcomes. To unpack the mechanisms behind these impacts and study the role that Champions play in the potential effectiveness of OTIP, the researchers will evaluate impacts on hospital staff outcomes, including knowledge and midwives' attitudes capturing their perceptions of autonomy, empowerment and motivation. For this, the researchers will rely on collected data from a cross-section of 3,750 patients (mother and newborn pairs) and panel data from roughly 750 midwives across 25 hospitals. Furthermore, they will determine whether the results on death rates can be generalised to hospitals in other regions of Ghana using administrative records of the Ghana Health Services on deliveries and maternal and newborn death rates for every high-density hospital countrywide.

#### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

A rigorous evaluation of OTIP Champions would be crucial not only for assessing the potential application of this training model to other areas of GHS, such as essential care for small babies and kangaroo mother care, but also for contributing to the academic literature by addressing gaps in our understanding of how different training methods can overcome barriers to the diffusion of new practices.

For patients, the benefits of participating are contributing to rigorous evidence that can help improve further the service quality provided to them and their families in the near future.

For midwives, there are tangible and direct benefits of participating in OTIP, including gaining knowledge in obstetric triage, improving empowerment, autonomy and motivation on the job, particularly for those selected to be Champions and participate in the on-site training led by GHS, Kybele and the national Champions.

Participation in the study is strictly voluntary, and respondents have the right to withdraw at any time. Anticipated risks are minimal, with no physical contact occurring during interviews.

Furthermore, no significant physical, psychological, social, legal, economic, or privacy-related risks are anticipated for participants.

The researchers do not anticipate any significant risks associated with participation in this study. The research activities are designed to minimize potential harm to participants, and stringent ethical guidelines are followed to ensure participant safety throughout the study process.

Given the nature of the study, which involves interviews and observations related to maternal

and child health, participants may experience minimal discomfort or inconvenience. However, every effort will be made to minimize any such discomfort, and participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Overall, the study poses no major physical, psychological, social, legal, economic, or privacy-related risks to participants.

Where is the study run from?

The study is run from 25 high-density (more than 1,200 deliveries in 2022) in the Central, Greater Accra and Western regions. These hospitals are included in the final phase of the national rollout of the OTIP training programme.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

March 2024 to December 2025

Who is funding the study?

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Dr Britta Augsburg, [britta\\_a@ifs.org.uk](mailto:britta_a@ifs.org.uk)

## Contact information

### Type(s)

Principal investigator

### Contact name

Dr Britta Augsburg

### ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8864-7751>

### Contact details

7 Ridgmount St  
London  
United Kingdom  
WC1E 7AE  
+44 (0)20 7291 4800  
[britta\\_a@ifs.org.uk](mailto:britta_a@ifs.org.uk)

### Type(s)

Public, Scientific

### Contact name

Dr Antonella Bancalari

### ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1012-9954>

### Contact details

7 Ridgmount St  
London

United Kingdom  
WC1E 7AE  
+44 (0)20 7291 4800  
antonella.bancalari@ifs.org.uk

**Type(s)**  
Scientific

**Contact name**  
Dr Mary Eyram Ashinyo

**ORCID ID**  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8493-9378>

**Contact details**  
Ghana Health Service Headquarters  
Private Mail Bag, Ministries  
Accra  
Ghana  
-  
+233 (0)208182647  
mary.ashinyo@ghs.gov.gh

**Type(s)**  
Public, Scientific

**Contact name**  
Ms Julia Loh

**Contact details**  
7 Ridgmount St  
London  
United Kingdom  
WC1E 7AE  
+44 (0)20 7291 4800  
julia.loh@ifs.org.uk

**Type(s)**  
Scientific

**Contact name**  
Prof Medge Owen

**Contact details**  
475 Vine Street, Winston-Salem  
North Carolina  
United States of America  
27101  
+1 (0)336 758 5201  
mowen@wakehealth.edu

# Additional identifiers

## Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

## ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

## Protocol serial number

GHSC02-LC08--0-3

# Study information

## Scientific Title

A trial to evaluate the effect of cascade training on obstetric triage for midwives in hospitals in Ghana compared to no training: impact on maternal and newborn health outcomes, and midwives' knowledge and attitudes

## Study objectives

The project's key research questions are as follows:

1. What is the impact of the Obstetric Triage Package (OTIP) on the quality of service during labour and delivery, as well as on maternal and neonatal survival, and on neonatal health outcomes?
2. To what extent does OTIP affect clinical knowledge and midwives' attitudes?

## Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

## Ethics approval(s)

approved 27/05/2024, Ghana Health Service Ethics Review Committee (PO Box MB 190, Accra, PO Box MB 190, Ghana; +233 (0)302 960628; ethics.research@ghs.gov.gh), ref: GHS-ERC:022/05/24

## Study design

Interventional cluster randomized controlled trial

## Primary study design

Interventional

## Study type(s)

Efficacy

## Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Triage for risk assessment of pregnant women when arriving for labour and delivery at hospital

## Interventions

A cluster-randomized controlled trial (cRCT) will be integrated into the final phase of the national rollout of the OTIP training programme, covering the Central, Greater Accra and

Western regions. Half of the 25 hospitals (12 hospitals) are randomly assigned to receive OTIP training in September 2024, and the other half (13 hospitals) receive OTIP approximately 4 months later. The later-treated hospitals act as the control group (no OTIP implemented yet).

To allocate clusters to treatment arms, the researchers stratified the sampled clusters by region (Accra, Central or Western regions). We then built blocks using m-distance (Mahalanobis) relative proximity based on hospital characteristics. After forming blocks of similar clusters (hospitals), they randomly allocated each hospital in a block, each one of the possibilities with the same probability. The statistical software Stata, and specifically the random number generator setting a seed, was used to generate the randomization.

The Obstetric Triage Package (OTIP) Champions Programme, developed by the NGO Kybele in partnership with GHS, consists of a 1-week on-site training on clinical knowledge and a new protocol to quickly assess (in less than 10 minutes since arrival) and prioritize the care of pregnant women (using colour-coded triage bands), with the goal of promptly and accurately identifying the severity of a patient's condition, determine the appropriate level of care, and ensure that those with the most critical needs receive immediate attention. At the core of its design, OTIP integrates rapid and accurate patient assessment and care planning as a routine part of midwives' practice (Williams et al., 2020).

The intervention also introduces a dedicated triage area in hospitals, where midwives assess obstetric patients upon their arrival. Midwives then assess the patient and record the patient's obstetric and medical history, vital signs and labour progress on a standardized triage assessment sheet, resulting in a categorisation of high, intermediate, or low risk, and the application of a corresponding colour-coded patient wristband. See the figure below for more details on categorization. A care plan is developed and documented based on the diagnosis and risk status. High-risk pregnancies require immediate intervention, with a doctor involved, intermediate-risk cases require careful and frequent monitoring, and low-risk cases proceed to normal delivery with the assistance of a midwife.

With the support of the NGO Kybele, the national champions – GHS healthcare staff (OB-GYN doctors and midwives) who were part of the pilot OTIP programme – train the champion midwives in their own hospital premises. The first day of training covers motivation on the job, clinical knowledge, as well as theoretical and practical sessions on how to use the new obstetric package (i.e., assessment surveys and forms, risk identification charts and colour-coded bands), and how to develop and implement care plans based on the diagnosis and risk status of patients.

The second day of training covers a module on monitoring (i.e., record keeping) and leading (i.e., how to deal with change opposition) OTIP's implementation. The next two days consist of formal training sessions led by the Champions, where they teach their own peers the content of the first day of training. Champions train their peers in two batches, one in each day. The final day consists of setting up the new triage area. After hospital management identifies the right area, Champions help to clean, order, and arrange the necessary equipment (plus a few tools donated by Kybele), assessment surveys and forms, as well as colour-coded bands. Champions also select among themselves who the triage in charge will be. The triage area is usually set up within or next to the labour ward.

The selection of Champions among midwives is conducted by either hospital management or fellow midwives. They are selected based on criteria that capture the extent to which midwives have leadership abilities. The exact content was developed from Kybele's prior experience in Ghanaian hospitals.

A cRCT will be integrated into the final phase of the national rollout of the OTIP training programme, covering the Central, Greater Accra and Western regions. Half of the 25 hospitals (12 hospitals) are randomly assigned to receive OTIP training in September 2024, and the other half (13 hospitals) receive OTIP approximately 4 months later. The later-treated hospitals act as the control group (no OTIP implemented yet).

## **Intervention Type**

Behavioural

## **Primary outcome(s)**

1. Process variables: representing the actual medical care received by mothers and their newborns, as reported by mothers during the in-person survey, both at baseline and at follow-up, 4 months later:
  - 1.1. Time (in minutes) between arrival and initial assessment
  - 1.2. Indicator capturing whether assessment received upon arrival complied with OTIP guidelines. For this, the researchers ask mothers the different vital signs measured and examinations. They will create an index capturing whether all, and -depending on variation – a certain percentage of assessments were performed.
  - 1.3. 0/1 Indicator capturing if the doctor intervened if complications during labour and delivery at the hospital
  - 1.4. Indicator capturing whether immediate postnatal checks complied with national guidelines. For this, the researchers ask mothers about the different vital signs measured and examinations for them and their newborns, as well as counselling on breastfeeding, danger signs, family planning, and future vaccination advice. The researchers will create an index capturing whether all, and -depending on variation – a certain percentage of assessments were performed.
2. Maternal and neonatal outcome variables: Including the health of pregnant women and newborns
  - 2.1. 0/1 Indicator capturing whether there were complications during labour and delivery at the hospital, as reported by the mother during the in-person survey at follow-up, 4 months after.
  - 2.2. Newborn APGAR scores (1 minute and 5 minutes) from records collected during the mother survey at baseline and follow-up, 4 months after. Depending on variation the researchers will use the actual score or a 0/1 indicator of whether the score was critical.
  - 2.3. Maternal mortality rate at the hospital level, from DHIMS II records for every month between January 2024 and January 2025
  - 2.4. Infant mortality rate at the hospital level, from DHIMS II records for every month between January 2024 and January 2025

## **Key secondary outcome(s)**

To examine the mechanisms behind the potential impacts of OTIP on the primary outcomes, the researchers will further consider secondary outcomes:

Hospital staff outcomes measured during the midwives survey at baseline and follow-up, 4 months after:

1. Clinical knowledge measured using a standardized test developed by Kybele's nursing researchers and GHS healthcare staff
2. Autonomy measured using Autonomy index
3. Empowerment measured using Empowerment index
4. Burnout index measured using the Maslach burnout inventory

## **Completion date**

31/12/2025

# Eligibility

## Key inclusion criteria

Intervention:

Hospitals: 25 high-density hospitals in the Greater Accra, Central and Western regions that had 1,200 deliveries in 2022. Inside each hospital, midwives nominated by management or their peers to become midwife champions will receive the OTIP training and lead the cascade training, promoting and monitoring the implementation of OTIP.

Data collection:

1. Midwives: midwives on permanent contracts in the maternity department, including those in charge of wards and clinics.
2. Service users: Mothers selected for interviews will be those who delivered in the hospital within the last 2 months, primarily from labour wards, postnatal wards, and postnatal care clinics. This eligibility criteria implies that the sample of mothers at baseline will be different to that at endline.

## Participant type(s)

Health professional, Service user

## Healthy volunteers allowed

No

## Age group

Adult

## Sex

Female

## Key exclusion criteria

Surveys:

1. Midwives on long-term leave
2. Mothers with significant medical conditions or acute illnesses that may impair their ability to participate in the survey
3. Midwives or mothers who do not consent to participate after reading our privacy notice

## Date of first enrolment

09/09/2024

## Date of final enrolment

09/09/2025

# Locations

## Countries of recruitment

Ghana

## Study participating centre

**Abura Dunkwa District Hospital**

Hospital street, Abura Dunkwa  
Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese  
Ghana  
8RWH+5P

**Study participating centre****Ajumako District Hospital**

C2FW+C2X, Esiam  
Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam  
Ghana  
C2FW+C2X

**Study participating centre****Dunkwa Municipal Hospital**

X67F+CGC, Dunkwa-On-Offin, Ghana  
Upper Denkyira East  
Ghana  
X67F+CGC

**Study participating centre****Our Lady Of Grace Hospital**

H2J3+7F Asikuma, Ghana  
Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa  
Ghana  
H2J3+7F

**Study participating centre****Saltpond Municipal Hospital**

6W2X+WC6, Saltpond, Ghana  
Mfantseman  
Ghana  
6W2X+WC6

**Study participating centre****St Francis Xavier Hospital**

120 Mankessim - Kumasi Rd, Foso  
Assin Foso  
Ghana  
MPX9+8G

**Study participating centre**  
**St Gregory Catholic Hospital**  
Big Apple, Buduburam  
Gomoa East  
Ghana  
GGFC+6P

**Study participating centre**  
**Swedru Government Hospital**  
59 Agona Swedru Hwy, Agona Swedru  
Agona West  
Ghana  
G8M4+XW

**Study participating centre**  
**Trauma & Specialist Hospital**  
99C5+RGW, Winneba  
Efutu  
Ghana  
99C5+RGW

**Study participating centre**  
**Twifo Ati Morkwa District Hospital**  
JF8C+JHM, Twifo Praso  
Twifo Ati Morkwa  
Ghana  
JF8C+JHM

**Study participating centre**  
**Winneba Municipal Hospital**  
89VG+8Q Winneba  
Efutu  
Ghana  
89VG+8Q

**Study participating centre**  
**Achimota Hospital**  
Aggrey St, Achimota  
Okai Koi North

Ghana  
JQHM+Q5X

**Study participating centre**  
**Ada East District Hospital**  
VHH7+J79, Unnamed Road, Bwetakope  
Ada East  
Ghana  
VHH7+J79

**Study participating centre**  
**Ga North Municipal Hospital**  
GW-0640-1032, Ofankor  
Ga North  
Ghana  
MP4C+3Q

**Study participating centre**  
**LEKMA Hospital**  
JV3H+4PW, Accra, Ghana  
Ledzokuku  
Ghana  
JV3H+4PW

**Study participating centre**  
**Maamobi General Hospital**  
Abavana St, Accra  
Ayawaso North  
Ghana  
HRR2+J9M

**Study participating centre**  
**Mamprobi Hospital**  
1 Ebenezer Cres, Accra  
Accra Metro  
Ghana  
GQQ3+6V

**Study participating centre**

**Shai Osudoku Hospital**

Ayikuma Rd, Dodowa  
Shai-Osudoku  
Ghana  
VWX5+VC

**Study participating centre****Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital**

J. De Graft-Johnson Ave, Takoradi  
Sekondi-Takoradi  
Ghana  
W7F4+H5

**Study participating centre****Father Thomas Alan Rooney Memorial Hospital**

RH39+445, Asankragua  
Wassa Amenfi West  
Ghana  
RH39+445

**Study participating centre****Kwesimintim Hospital**

W679+45J Jamaica street, Takoradi  
Effia-Kwesimintsim  
Ghana  
W679+45J

**Study participating centre****Prestea Government Hospital**

CVM2+2H Prestea- Huni Valley District  
Prestea-Huni Valley  
Ghana  
CVM2+2H

**Study participating centre****St Martin De Porres (Ellembelle) Hospital**

Main Road, Eikwe  
Ellembelle  
Ghana  
XG8J+34

**Study participating centre**  
**Tarkwa Municipal Hospital**  
824F+38F new hospital, Tarkwa  
Tarkwa-Nsuaem  
Ghana  
824F+38F

**Study participating centre**  
**Wassa Akropong Govt Hospital**  
QWJ8+GHP, Akropong  
Wassa Amenfi East  
Ghana  
QWJ8+GHP

## **Sponsor information**

**Organisation**  
Thrive Programme

## **Funder(s)**

**Funder type**  
Government

**Funder Name**  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Alternative Name(s)**  
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK Government, FCDO

**Funding Body Type**  
Government organisation

**Funding Body Subtype**  
National government

**Location**  
United Kingdom

# Results and Publications

## Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The anonymised datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository after the study is published in a peer-review journal.

## IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in publicly available repository

## Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Protocol article</a>		21/10/2025	24/10/2025	Yes	No
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes