



PHOTO & CAPTION

Saving Senegal's Newborns



Photo: USAID/Matar Camara

Rokhaya Ngom, head midwife at Kebemer District Health Center, resuscitates a newborn struggling to breathe.

More than a quarter of all child deaths in Senegal occur during the first month of life. And in the rural district of Kebemer, nearly half of all babies are born at home.

With support from USAID, Senegal's Ministry of Health developed a plan to improve newborn care in Kebemer. The initiative provided equipment for newborn care to six rural health facilities and trained 329 community health workers to provide essential care during the first few moments of life.

"Today, we have a newborn corner in our clinic where we can care for them," says nurse Magatte Cisse Ndiaye. "I have been trained to do this, thanks to the project."

Community healthcare providers were also trained to promote better newborn care among community members, including husbands and religious leaders. Local radio stations advised women to deliver their babies at a health facility and broadcast key survival messages

about the need to keep the baby warm, delay the first bath, breastfeed within an hour of birth and visit the health facility immediately after any sign of danger.

Since the initiative began, the proportion of women giving birth in a health facility rose from 53 percent to 74 percent. And based on the success of the program, Senegal's government is expected to implement a new essential newborn care policy and extend the USAID-supported pilot initiative nationwide.