

Ruaraka Uhai Neema Hospital: Network to Improve Health Outcomes

In Nairobi, Kenya, urban poor living in informal settlements face many barriers to receiving quality, accessible and reliable maternal and child health (MCH) services. Health indicators that are higher than the national average reflect this situation: the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Nairobi slums is estimated as high as 706/100,000 which is 26 percent higher than the estimation for Kenya as a whole. The under five mortality rate is 151/1,000 compared to 85/1,000 across Kenya.

This disparity stems from a number of issues: inability to identify danger signs and seek preventative care; poor infrastructure; low quality personnel; ineffective emergency referrals; affordable overcrowded government clinics; and costly private facilities. As a result, women seek delivery services only in extreme circumstances, and often when it is too late to save their life or the baby's life.

The HANSHEP Health Enterprise Fund, implemented by the SHOPS project, selected Ruaraka Uhai Neema Hospital to expand access to quality maternal and child health services for poor residents of Nairobi's slums through the creation of the Mother and Child Health Referral Network.

The Business Model

The Ruaraka Uhai Neema Hospital (RUNH) aims to increase access to essential preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services and to improve maternal, child and adolescent health outcomes. A provider of top-notch quality care, RUNH serves a catchment area of approximately 750,000 people in Nairobi.

RUNH's business model is unique in that it recognizes and capitalizes on the three different categories of patients that co-exist within their catchment area: growing middle-class residents, the slums' upper class residents, and those living below the poverty line. RUNH operates as a sustainable, revenue-generating hospital by providing paying, middle-income patients with core MCH services. As a non profit with a social mission, RUNH aspires to serve poor patients that do not have the ability to pay. Thus, RUNH employs cross-subsidization and a tiered pricing structure to be able to provide services to the poor. By charging middle-income clients higher prices, RUNH is able to offset the cost of free or steeply discounted care for the poor.

RUNH created a referral network made up of five private maternity clinics located within the informal settlements. By ensuring that reliable, quality services are available, RUNH is attracting patients to these facilities, and then working to



Maria Anyango with her twins at the RUNH Newborn Unit.

Ruaraka Uhai Neema Hospital

Grantee at a Glance

- Vision: Quality health care and better health for all
- Innovation type: Mother and child health referral network in informal settlements employing cross-subsidization and tiered pricing structure
- Health focus: Maternal and child health
- Target population: Low-income residents of informal settlements in northeast Nairobi
- Country: Kenya

improve referrals, particularly for cases requiring emergency obstetric care. Poor patients that the partner clinics refer to RUNH for more complex care receive services for free.

Key Support and Technical Assistance

With the Health Enterprise Fund's support, RUNH identified five strong private maternity clinic partners and established the Mother and Child Health Referral Network (MCHRN). RUNH updated the partners' equipment, renovated their clinics, and trained staff so that each clinic could provide quality care. To facilitate access to emergency care, RUNH set up an ambulance service which runs 24/7 within the community. With the grant, RUNH expanded its own maternity wing to accommodate the expected influx of emergency obstetric patients referred by the network.

The fund provided technical assistance through an expert in clinic referral networks, who held in-depth meetings with partner clinics, and provided strategic guidance to RUNH on the strengthening and sustainability of the network. Building on this support, the fund helped RUNH develop a basic financial model for its ambulance services to help the company understand the volume and mix of clients required to sustainably serve poor patients.

The Health Enterprise Fund also provided technical assistance in clinical quality and health care financing. The fund identified a clinical expert to conduct a needs assessment and then develop and deliver an intrapartum clinical care training. The fund also identified a health care financing consultant to help RUNH research and design micro-insurance products which could be adopted by the

network, targeting better-off slum residents. By offering microinsurance, RUNH would be able to mitigate the income shock that catastrophic health events, like obstetric emergencies, can have on poor or vulnerable families.

The Impact

“ I am more than grateful to all who made this possible; I can now relax and afford a smile, as I look at my baby who I've named Angel Steven. We did not have any money, and I wonder how we could have managed, especially since I underwent Caesarian Section which is quite costly.”
– Caroline Gathoni, patient

Within 15 months of working with the Health Enterprise Fund, RUNH provided maternal and child health services to over 40,000 people. Since the referral network was established, nearly 800 women and children were referred to RUNH by the five partner maternity clinics. As the network strengthened, it contributed a significant portion of deliveries and high risk cases handled by RUNH. With the support of the ambulance service, the network refers approximately 100 poor patients for delivery per month, and of these deliveries, around 35 percent are high risk cases. Recognizing that all patients seek quality and reliability in their health care providers, RUNH offers the same set of services regardless of income level or background. Ultimately, RUNH hopes that the quality of service offered in its hospital and throughout the referral network will create more trust in the health system, encouraging Kenyans to avoid future health risks by seeking care earlier.

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For more information about the SHOPS project, visit: www.shopsproject.org



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