



“BRUSH FOR TWO”: ORAL HEALTH CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVE FOR MIDWIVES IN ADDIS ABABA PRIMARY HEALTH CENTERS, ETHIOPIA



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ALLIANCE FOR ORAL HEALTH ACROSS BORDERS

INTRODUCTION

Oral health during pregnancy is essential to maternal and fetal outcomes, yet it is often neglected in antenatal care, especially in low-resource settings like Ethiopia. Midwives are ideally positioned to address this gap, but they frequently lack the training to do so. Inadequate knowledge and limited inter-professional collaboration have led to missed opportunities for early intervention. This project addresses these challenges by training midwives in Addis Ababa using adapted Smiles for Life materials, aiming to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to oral health in pregnancy.



Figure 1: Group photo of participating midwives with the project leader after an oral health training session using Smiles for Life curriculum at Addis Ababa primary health centers.

RESULTS

Data was collected from 22 midwives across two Primary Health Centers. Most participants (59%) were female, with a median of 7 years of ANC experience. There was an overall 36 percentage point increase in midwives' knowledge of periodontal diseases in pregnant women post-training (from 64% to 100%). Similarly, positive attitudes toward oral health integration into antenatal care improved by 45 percentage points (from 23% to 68%). Practices also showed meaningful progress, with 27 percentage point growth in intention to routinely ask pregnant women about oral health (from 73% to 100%).

CONCLUSION

These findings demonstrate that integrating oral health training into standard midwifery programs is an effective, low-cost strategy to improve pregnancy outcomes. This study supports recommendations for the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health to adopt this curriculum nationwide and include oral health screening in official antenatal care guidelines to reduce preventable birth complications.

OBJECTIVE

This project aims to promote the oral health literacy and practices of midwives working in antenatal care at primary health centers in Addis Ababa. A targeted training session was delivered using adapted Smiles for Life materials, with the goal of equipping midwives to better integrate oral health into routine ANC services. The initiative also aimed to assess changes in their knowledge, attitude, and intended practice before and after the training.

METHODOLOGY

A pre-training questionnaire was administered to 22 midwives at two Primary Health Centers, assessing Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices regarding oral health in pregnancy. Following this, a structured training session using the Smiles for Life national oral health curriculum (Module 5: Oral Health in Pregnancy) was conducted. The same questionnaire was then re-administered to evaluate changes in knowledge, attitudes, and intended practices. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare pre- and post-training responses.

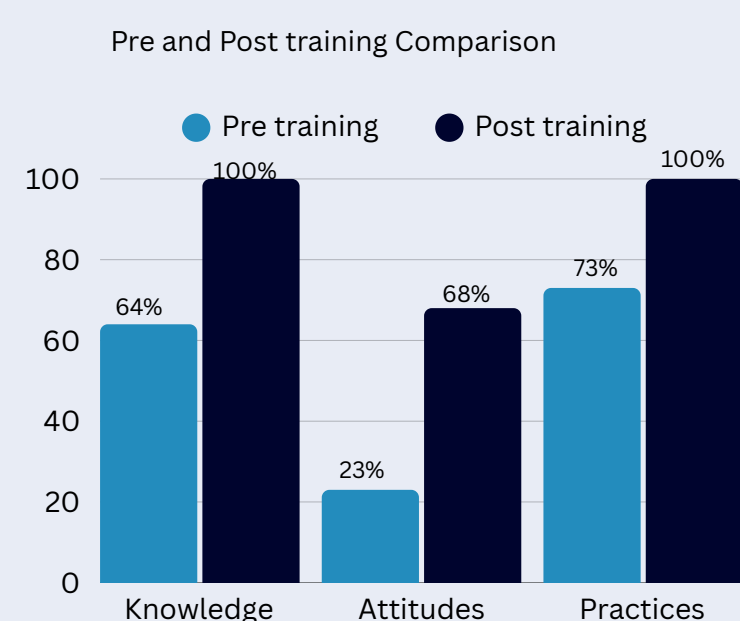


Figure 2. Percentage comparison of midwives' KAP before and after the training

Gender Distribution of Participants

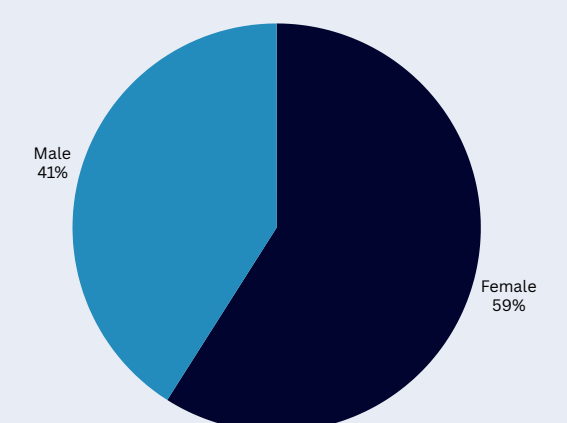


Figure 3. Gender distribution of midwives who participated in the training

DISCUSSION

This training significantly improved midwives' knowledge (+36 percentage points) and attitudes (+45 percentage points) toward oral health in pregnancy, demonstrating that even brief, structured education can address critical gaps in ANC. While self-reported practice intentions improved (e.g., 100% now plan to ask about oral health), long-term follow-up is needed to assess real-world impact. Scaling this PHC-focused intervention could strengthen maternal-child health outcomes nationally.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Access Full Project Materials;
Includes pre- and post-training questionnaires, Smiles for Life training module, original research source, and references.



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