



Birth Life Saving Skills (BLISS)

“saving lives, one mother and one baby at a time”



Summary report of Birth Life Saving Skills (BLISS) programme (January 2018)

Birth Life Saving Skills (BLISS) is a community-based health education programme of 17 lessons covering basic health, pregnancy, birth, new-born care and family planning. The course is taught to both men and women, and aims to raise community awareness of maternal-child health issues, and to significantly reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. At the end of each course participants are awarded a certificate of participation together with an illustrate booklet (“Miracle of Life”) and a small gift useful in preparing for a clean and healthy delivery.

BLISS is particularly vital in Afghanistan which tragically boasts the world’s highest infant mortality rate and one of the highest maternal mortality rates. BLISS is so necessary because most of these deaths are due to lack of basic health care knowledge and awareness and are therefore easily preventable.

BLISS programme Herat started in March 2013 since when BLISS has been taught to 2,228 women and 1,176 men in 68 villages with a total population of approx. 224,300 people. A further 4 villages have now been surveyed and selected for the 18th cycle of teaching BLISS to 200 more men and women.

The most recent gift from the Kate Farrer Foundation (£3,000) received in March 2017 was allocated to the 16th cycle of BLISS which was conducted in 4 villages (Abjalil, Qala-e-Deldar, Beland Ab and Karta Negarestan) in Injil District of Herat Province, from July to October 2017. These villages have an average of 443 families living in each, so this cycle will have indirectly benefitted a total of 1,770 families, through 200 people (60 men and 140 women) having participated in the courses and passing on what they have learnt. The gift from KFF provided the educational materials, and the costs of transporting the BLISS team to the villages and back each day, for this cycle.

Educational materials include an illustrated hand out for each participant at the end of every lesson. These are collected in a folder and kept for easy reference by the participants and their families. This is complemented by an illustrated book (“Miracle of Life”) going through the 9 months of pregnancy, with pictures of the developing foetus. Each participant is also given a zipped bag, with an apron and a list of the other items to collect and keep in the bag in preparation for a safe and hygienic delivery.

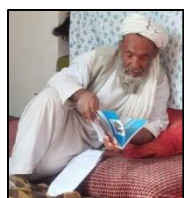
Evaluations of all BLISS course participants are conducted before and after each course, plus one year after the completion of the course. The evaluations show changes in measurable indicators of **awareness** and **behaviour**.

BLISS course evaluation results		Awareness indicators		Behavioural indicators	
		clean birth practices, healthy eating, prevention of bleeding, danger signs in labour and in the newborn, newborn resuscitation, importance of breastfeeding, postpartum care, and prevention of STDs		prenatal checks, planning for the delivery	delivery location, breastfeeding practices
		Women	Men	Women	
Pre course		1%	1%	1%	35%
Post course		95%	69%	N/A	N/A
One year follow up	Course participants	97%	39%	63%	98%
	Not in course but given birth in past year	93%	N/A	36%	85%

In addition to evaluating course participants as part of the one-year follow-up evaluation, 5 to 10 women who have given birth in the past year (but did not do the BLISS course) are also interviewed, in each village. The results are very encouraging, showing that those who have done the course are passing on the life-saving skills they’ve learned.

For the most recent one-year follow up evaluation, in the four villages of the 13th cycle of BLISS (also part-funded by KFF), participants were asked about the book, zipped bag and apron that they had received on the completion of the course. There were many encouraging reports of the items having been kept and used for their intended purpose:

“Agha Saheb” reported that when he learned that his daughter-in-law had become pregnant, he went out and purchased the items on the list, so that she and his grandchild would have a safe and clean delivery.



“Kaka Jan” came to the follow up evaluation proudly clutching his course certificate and the Miracle of Life book, saying that even though he is illiterate he is now familiar with all the pictures and often has a family member read parts of the book to him – so they can learn too!



“Baba Gul” told the team that when he did the course his son’s wife was pregnant, so he passed on to his son how he should care for his wife and prepare for the arrival of their child. The proud man brought his healthy granddaughter along and presented her as a direct outcome of BLISS!