



## MCH HANDBOOK: A Window of Opportunity for Unified Home-based Records and Promotion of Health at Family Level

### INTRODUCTION

Mother and Child Health (MCH) Handbook is a collection of standard essential health information and records for counseling and record keeping on maternal and child health. This handbook aims to improve linkages among community, family and healthcare providers; it also increases community awareness and enhances women empowerment. In addition, this book increases knowledge of women and their families regarding key maternal and child health issues. MCH Handbook is an integrated home-based record, which covers all stages of maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) from antenatal care to delivery, birth notification, postnatal care, child and pregnant women vaccinations, growth monitoring and early child development. The pilot project of MCH HB has been officially launched in August 2017 and continued until June 2018 in two districts of Afghanistan (Mir bacha Kot in Kabul and Kama in Nangarhar). Main partners for supporting this initiative are JICA, UNICEF and WHO. The project evaluated on May 2018 by third party to assess the feasibility of MCH HB in Afghanistan.



### CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Afghanistan has made progress in the last fifteen years, but still has among the worst in the world consider to universal health coverage (UHC); and is still struggling to extend access to basic health nutrition services, Continuum of Care (CoC) and multi-sectoral approaches. Tools are needed that can empower poor families to take control over children's and mothers' health care. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in Afghanistan still uses separate records for birth registration, pregnancy monitoring, birth monitoring, vaccination, growth monitoring and childhood illness monitoring. There is no document that is owned by the family that records the mother and child's trajectory from pregnancy through delivery and the first year of life.

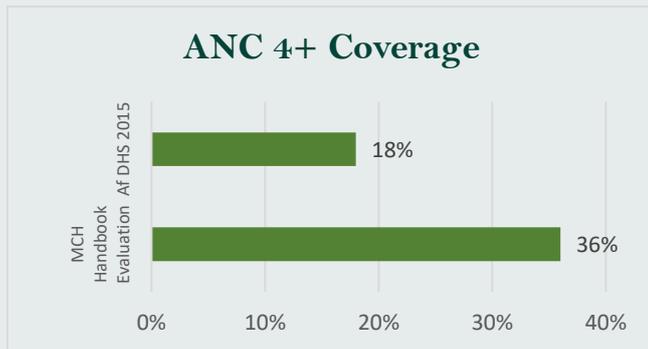
### EVIDENCES

The effectiveness of this initiative has already been proved in many countries. Base on a study conducted in Indonesia the Ratio of mothers who received at least 4 ANC had 11 % difference between those received MCH HB and those not received.

Also a KAP study results in Palestine indicates that the knowledge of mothers about danger signs of pregnancy improved from 26% (base line) to 73%.



The findings of evaluation of MCH HB in Afghanistan is also encouraging. ANC visits are 78%, 55%, 45% and 36% for ANC 1, ANC 2, ANC 3 and ANC 4+ respectively, while the finding of AfDHS 2015 revealed ANC 4+ as of 18%.



In focus group discussions, all health staff interviewed reported that the MCH HB was a better record system as compared to the previous system.

Overall, only 0.5% of respondents who had received a handbook had subsequently lost the handbook (99.5% retention rate). Health facility staff and implementing agencies emphasized that MCH HB retention rates were higher than retention rates of the previous service record cards.

On average, women who had received a handbook were more likely to answer MCH knowledge questions correctly as compared to women who had not received a handbook.

## BARRIERS

- Low literacy level of women to read the messages
- Weak coordination between health facility sections on distribution of MCH HB
- Health care provider providing less consultation of all area of MCH handbook to the mothers and clients coming for receiving MNCH services
- Incomplete record keeping (filling out records for multiple ANC and PNC visits)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Gradually scale up the MCH Handbook in order to replace the existing maternal and child health recording system
- Integrate the MCH Handbook indicators in the HIMS
- Include the cost of MCH Handbook printing and training cost in the BPHS and EPHS contracts
- Revise the MCH Handbook after each phase of scale up (if necessary)

## REFERENCES

1. Process Evaluation of the Implementation of MCH HB in Two Districts of Mir Bacha Kot in Kabul and Kama in Nangarhar, Afghanistan, 2018
2. Hasil studi intervensi nsibuku KIA di Kabupaten Garut (2007-2009)
3. MCH Handbook Beneficiary Survey, Palestine, 2016