

Wrapping up our project in Preah Vihear Province

After six years of working in Preah Vihear Province, one of the most remote and underprivileged areas of Cambodia, our Saving Babies Lives team is finally wrapping up their outreach to the province's villages, health centres and referral hospitals. The conclusion of the project marks a tangible accomplishment: improving neonatal health for a population of 250,000. Despite encountering challenges – a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, staffing shortages and more – their dedication has led to measurable improvements in local health workers' life-saving skills and knowledge across neonatal care. They also provided all 38 health centres and two referral hospitals in the province with much-needed equipment to save sick newborns.

"I was always nervous to perform resuscitation on a baby. I wasn't sure what pressure I should apply so I usually applied more than necessary. Now, I call upon my training: the pressure and pace used to squeeze the bag, and the correct position of the mask around the baby's mouth. I'm pleased that I can now act so quickly and confidently." – **Chanmetrey, midwife**

Project outcomes: Research



25,957

baby health
surveys conducted



413

verbal autopsies
performed



Project outcomes: Training



447

local healthcare
workers trained in
neonatal care



622

mentorship
sessions in local
health facilities



Project outcomes: Village health



544

community health
volunteers engaged



684

participatory
action research
sessions



Maintaining impact

The Saving Babies Lives team is finalising a monitoring and evaluation framework with the Preah Vihear Provincial Health Department to conduct annual appraisals of health workers' knowledge to see if refresher training is needed.

Beginning a new project in Siem Reap Province

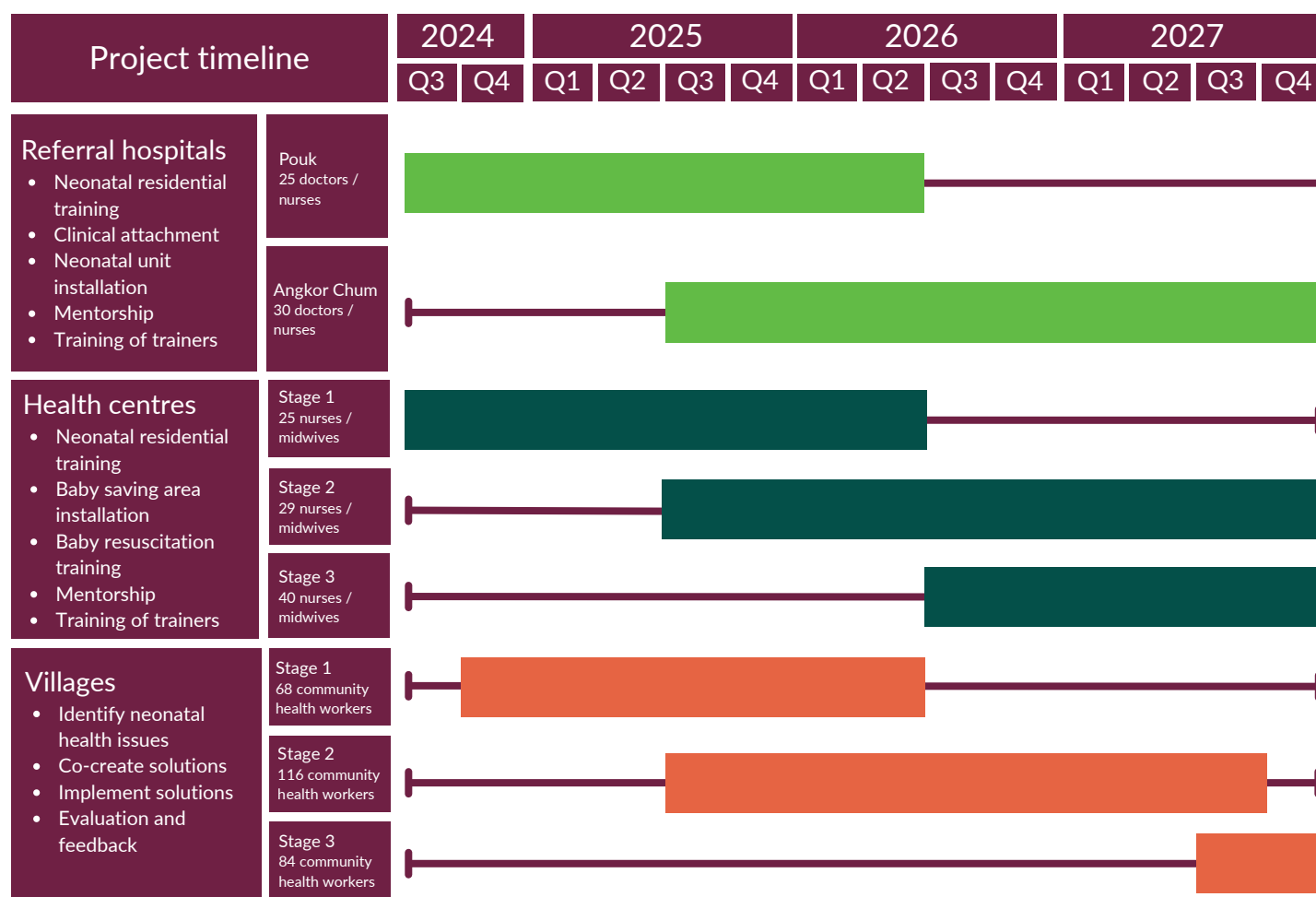
In August 2024, AHC started a new phase of the Saving Babies Lives project in the Angkor Chum District of Siem Reap Province. After engaging 50 local referral hospital and health centre staff with intensive neonatal residential training, AHC will continue with 18 months of targeted mentorship to reinforce learnings. They've also equipped one referral hospital with a neonatal unit and four health centres with specialised equipment in designated baby-saving areas.

The team expects to spend six to seven years providing training, mentorship and community mobilisation support to all 23 health centres and two referral hospitals in Angkor Chum.

"Since AHC's training, we have more confidence in resuscitating babies and can now save them on time. AHC should provide training to every health centre and referral hospital in Angkor Chum and other provinces." – Sorsorsdam, health centre nurse



Siem Reap timeline and expected outputs



Transitioning to local leadership and merging with AHC's community team

In effort to fulfill AHC's long-term goal of transitioning all programmes to local leadership, our Saving Babies Lives team began the process of merging with our community team in 2023. Ms Daly Leng now leads the programme. The merger allows the teams to share their connections and strategies while working within the villages, which has helped improve the functioning of both programmes in Cambodia's rural communities.



A theory of change

In July 2024, the Saving Babies Lives team conducted a full-day theory of change workshop to reflect and evaluate the last six years and plan for the next phase of the programme.

The full-day workshop welcomed 19 participants from eight different teams involved in Saving Babies Lives. It encouraged them to think critically about the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and how they can improve it in this next phase. The workshop was a great success, helping the team better understand the programme's goals and increase their confidence in the project going forward.

"This reflection workshop was quite useful to learn across the team, understand more about the programme and get truthful feedback from everyone. We should do this for every programme." – **AHC Hospital Director & CEO, Dr Ngoun Chanpheaktra**



Finalising four years of research

After four years of neonatal mortality research in Preah Vihear, the team has finally submitted their first research paper to begin the official peer review process. Working closely with community-based health workers, they established a surveillance system to help explore the complex causes of stillbirths and neonatal deaths in each village in Preah Vihear. If accepted for publication, their findings and methodology has the potential to be replicated in low-resource contexts around the world to improve reporting of perinatal mortality data.



"We've confidently helped three premature babies survive."

Baby Channa was born at 29 weeks, weighing just 1.3 kilograms. Born too soon, too small and too weak, she was blue and barely breathing. She needed immediate help to survive.

Fortunately, she was born at Koh Keh Health Centre in Preah Vihear Province, where its staff received neonatal resuscitation training and mentorship from our Saving Babies Lives team in August 2023. Chanthol, one of the centre's midwives, knew what to do. She placed Channa under a radiant warmer provided by AHC and resuscitated her. Soon, Channa turned pink and began to breathe properly.



"Since our training from AHC's SBL team, we've had three premature babies that needed resuscitation. We've confidently helped them all survive," shared Chanthol.

The Koh Keh team prepared to transfer Channa to the nearest referral hospital for more advanced support. Channa's mother, 20-year-old Lina, requested they go to AHC instead, a children's hospital 130 kilometres away she'd only heard positive things about.

"My friends and neighbours always talk about AHC and how well they treat their children. I will do anything for my baby and her health. The distance doesn't matter to me," shared Lina.

At our neonatal unit, Channa received neonatal care and regular monitoring, while Lina learned valuable lessons such as skin-to-skin contact to help Channa regulate her temperature, breathing and heart rate. After 31 days, Lina and her husband were overjoyed. Now stable and weighing two kilograms, their daughter was ready to go home.

"Doctors and nurses at Koh Keh Health Centre and AHC saved her life. The care and services at AHC confirmed what I heard. I feel so blessed to have brought my baby here," expressed Lina.

The strong and committed partnership between our Saving Babies Lives team and healthcare workers in Preah Vihear's rural communities ensures premature newborns like Channa receive the quality, compassionate care they need to grow up healthy and strong – the way every child deserves to.



Thank you for improving health care for newborns across Cambodia!