

# Report of BirthLink's Visit to Mongolian Midwifery Conference, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2013



## Outline:

The main objective for this visit was to attend the National Midwifery Conference on 3<sup>rd</sup> May in Ulaanbatar. The significant development in the Professional Midwifery Association is that the former president and obstetrician, Dr Buyanjargal, has stepped down and has appointed a midwife, Davasuren, as president. This is a historic move for the Midwifery Association and is in line with all European Midwifery Professional Bodies. It is a recommendation that BirthLink has held since our involvement in Mongolia as has Dr Salik Govind of the WHO.

Appointing a midwife to the role of Midwife Association President is an important step in raising the midwives' profile. Furthermore, a lead midwife is better able to understand the needs of midwives and take the profession forward.

BirthLink was invited to give a speech on protecting Normal Childbirth at the conference, which we did. But our main motivation for attending was to show solidarity and positivity for this development and to increase our links with the Midwifery Association.

## Review of our objectives from previous visit:

- *Carry out Ministry and WHO request to hand over education materials for validation* – the materials have all been handed over to the WHO Mongolian office. There is now a new representative for the WHO. Our involvement with possible roll out of education and further train the trainer programmes needs to be followed up with the current local representative.
- *Confirm and carry out Mongolian midwifery visit to the UK* – In January this year, 2 Mongolian midwives were brought over to the UK and had a very enriching and informative visit (see separate report).
- *Remain in contact with lead midwives for support and remote supervision* – Our contact with the lead midwives in Erdenet and Ulaanbatar has strengthened, enhanced by the UK visit. A presentation of findings from UK visit was delivered at the Midwifery Conference, which was an important articulation and exploration of many of the issues that BirthLink’s work has focussed on in Mongolia.
- *Increase collaboration with Dr Buyanjargal and the Midwifery Association* – The change in Midwifery Association president is a most important development for midwifery in Mongolia and there is potential for BirthLink’s work to be even more effective. Our relationship with Buyanjargal is no longer significant. Davasuren, the new president, has indicated a strong desire for collaboration with BirthLink. The Minister of Health also attended the conference and gave a vote of thanks for BirthLink especially the work we have done in education, another positive inroad for increased influence.
- *Return as needed for monitoring* – we believe that our work is not yet over in Mongolia, see action points below.



Bayarhu and Davasuren



Davasuren with Mongolian Minister of Health

## Conference Notes:

The major themes to come up during the course of the day were as follows:

- A strong desire from Midwives to improve pre-registration education and for student midwives to have hands-on clinical experience during their training. This is in line with the

European model and fits well with the English Curriculum which we have already taken to the University of Health Science as a model for them to investigate.

- An expressed desire for more organised, mandatory Continued Professional Development, also in line with international practice. This is central to the work BirthLink has done since 2008 and the educational materials we have developed forms the core of mandatory training in the UK.
- An expressed need for changing workload – Midwives to take responsibility for Normal Birth – in line with European practice.
- A desire to reduce unnecessary intervention, increase normal birth and raise standards including appropriate care measures – including more active labour and birth, alternative positions for labour and kinder care of women. These are issues that have formed much of our previous discussions.
- Raise the morale in midwifery and gain greater recognition for the role.
- Greater wish for sharing knowledge of practice amongst midwives in different regions/clinical areas. In our work in the rural regions, one of the benefits has been to bring midwives from isolated areas together to share their experiences and knowledge.

## **Other outcomes:**

Outside of the conference we also met with 10 senior midwifery figures (Davasuren, president of Midwifery Association, several board members of the association and the Midwifery Managers from 3 major hospitals. The views expressed on next steps for Mongolian midwives were that this is an important time in Mongolia for midwives. They believe that developing strong links with other Midwifery Associations, especially with the Royal College of Midwives, is essential. They want further support with the Midwifery pre-registration (undergraduate) curriculum in order to raise the competency and fitness to practice for new midwives. They further want support with organisation and delivery of Midwives' Professional Development, both with train the trainer and rolling out a nationwide programme for all where compliance is monitored.

We also met with Dr Usukbayer, our former project co-ordinator who left Mongolia for 3 years for further training abroad. He is now working at University of Health Science and is in a position to influence the development of the Midwifery Curriculum.

## **Next steps:**

Looking back over the last 5 years of BirthLink's work in Mongolia, we have seen that midwives are becoming more confident and vocal about their needs as a profession. There is great appetite for knowledge and change both at a strategic level and at grassroots. Midwives want to deliver high quality care that is in line with international standards. They believe they have an important role in the health and safety of mothers and infants and they want to improve the outcomes for Mongolian families.

We feel that our work has had an effect both for individual midwives but also at the level of WHO, Midwifery Association and the Ministry of Health. The relationships we have built up in each of these bodies are very important and we feel that we can now capitalise on them in several ways:

- To help maintain momentum by keeping close ties with Davasuren (Midwifery Association president) as well as maintaining contact with the Health Minister and WHO
- By assisting with Midwifery Curriculum changes through our former co-ordinator, Usukhbayer, with the support of the Health Ministry.
- To continue assisting with the organisation and design of the Professional Development programme; to help develop a supervision and compliance process.
- To continue to support the roll out of the professional development in other regions and through train the trainer programmes.

We feel there is a strong case for our continued work in Mongolia in the medium term, at the same level of intensity, where we can build in an exit once the pre-registration curriculum and continued professional development programme is more robust.



Frances Barnsley and Maaike Carter, May 2013