

NICHE International - Business Plan 2023-2024

Newborn Infant and Child Health International (NICHE International) is a small, UK based, medical charity dedicated to improving the survival and health of newborn babies in resource poor areas of the world.

This is done by training health care workers using a specially developed Neonatal Care Course, which covers important topics identified by the World Health Organisation. Sustainability is then ensured by training local doctors and nurses to deliver this course themselves independently of UK trainers, using a recognised 'Train the Trainers' course.

NICHE International trainers have taught courses in Cameroon, Liberia and Uganda. We have established partnerships with local health organisations and other UK based charities working in these countries.

NICHE is run by a board of volunteer trustees, variously trained in medicine, IT, finance and administration. Our highly trained course instructors also give their time voluntarily. There are no premises and no overheads. Funds come from grant giving bodies, charitable trusts and community fund raising.

Despite being a small charity with limited resources, NICHE International has been successful in training health workers in the countries where we work and supporting them to run their own courses and improve the quality of care they offer to newborn babies. There are of course challenges to offering neonatal care in resource poor areas, including skills retention, sustainability and finances, but the charity has strategies to tackle these.

The Organisation:

Who we are: a small medical charity working in international newborn care.

Mission: Our mission is to make outstanding care of new born babies in the first month of life an everyday thing in resource poor areas of the world.

The need: Neonatal mortality (the number of deaths in the first 28 days of life per 1,000 live births) in the UK in 2019 stood at 3/1,000. Cameroon's was 26/1,000, Liberia's 32/1,000 and Uganda 20/1,000 (Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/>). The UN's 2016 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity (<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>). SDG number 3 concerns Good Health and Well-being and, within it, is the goal to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12/1,000 by 2030. SDG number 17 is entitled

“Partnerships for the Goals”; to be sustainable, there must be buy-in and collaboration from all parties.

Charity Objective: To relieve sickness and to promote and protect the good health of babies and children. To work to reduce mortality rates in low- and middle-income countries, by assisting in the provision of training courses and other healthcare projects.

This is achieved by: Teaching Neonatal Care provider courses to frontline practitioners from all sectors of health care in Cameroon and other low- and middle- income countries.

Promoting sustainability, by training local staff to become instructors and teach the Neonatal Care course to others.

Management of the charity: NICHE International is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in England, registered number 1174977. There are 7 trustees, 5 of whom are doctors, and the chair of the trustees rotates every 2 years. Trustees have experience working for teaching and medical charities in Cameroon, Liberia and other resource poor countries, in project management, post- graduate teaching, IT and business. All the trustees carry out the objectives of the CIO in a voluntary capacity and there is more information about each of them at <http://www.nicheinternational.org.uk/our-trustees/>. Meetings are held in accordance with the constitution.

Background and related experience:

The volunteers for NICHE International are doctors, nurses and resuscitation officers with appropriate clinical backgrounds who have been accredited by the Advanced Life Support Group (ALSG) and/or the Resuscitation Council (RC(UK)) to teach neonatal and other life support courses in the UK. All have considerable experience of instructing; most of them train instructors regularly in the UK, some of them are course directors and educators, one is the neonatal education lead for the European Resuscitation Council and all of them have knowledge and experience of teaching and/or working in low- and middle-income countries. Instructors are recruited through ALSG, and through teaching contacts of current instructors. Volunteer instructors from the UK have been donating considerable amounts of their time developing and facilitating courses in Cameroon every year since 2014. They have run Neonatal Care Courses in Cameroon, Liberia and Uganda.

The Newborn Care Course (NCC) was designed by ALSG www.alsg.org and MCAI (Maternal and Childhealth Advocacy International) www.mcai.org especially for resource limited settings, and has been further adapted over the last 5 years by NICHE International instructors. The educational content and the governance of the course is overseen by the Strengthening Emergency Care Sub-Committee of ALSG. Three of the NICHE International trustees are members of this sub-committee.

The NCC uses simple equipment, and emphasises basic care, concentrating on areas identified by the World Health Organisation which contribute most to neonatal mortality rates.

[\(https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/newborn/enap_consultation/en/\)](https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/newborn/enap_consultation/en/).

The ALSG Generic Instructor Course (GIC) is widely regarded as one of the best short Train the Trainer courses available. It covers educational theory, and practical teaching assessment and feedback skills. Candidates learn how to run simulations, how to deliver effective lectures, teach clinical skills and run small group workshops. NICHE International GIC trainers have been adapting this course since 2016 so that it can be run for 12 candidates by 5 overseas trainers (including educator and course director)

Operational Plan:

Partnership:

In 2016, MCAI entered into a formal partnership with the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services (CBCHS) to provide NCCs in the anglophone regions of Cameroon. CBCHS provided teaching premises as well as in-country accommodation and transport for UK Instructors. MCAI provided volunteer instructors and training equipment and ALSG were educational guarantors for the course. MCAI was instrumental in successfully setting up the Newborn Care Courses in Cameroon and has now moved on to similar obstetric and neonatal projects in Liberia. NICHE International was set up in 2017 by the instructors previously working with MCAI, to continue the neonatal training in Cameroon - and the GIC courses in particular - in partnership with CBCHS and with a continued link with ALSG.

MCAI, ALSG and NICHE International entered into a formal partnership for the extension of this project to Liberia.

NICHE International has partnered with Child Health Matters (CHM), Charity number 1184421, for the project in Uganda. This is another small medical education charity whose charitable object includes providing grants to support or assist in outreach programmes and public health education in the Ruhija area of Uganda.

Teaching plan and sustainability:

Aware that resuscitation skills in particular decline over time and that one-off infrequent courses are not sustainable, NICHE International instructors have devised a 10-step route to local NCC faculty development and training self-sufficiency, which starts with delivery of a first provider course, and ends with a country establishing its own faculty to teach the courses and develop further instructors (see <http://www.nicheinternational.org.uk/sustainable-learning/>)

CAMEROON

Cameroon is NICHE's most established project. There are now over 30 fully trained Cameroonian instructors who are very active in continuing the training without any UK instructors on the ground. The Cameroon Baptist Church Health Services (CBCHS)

funded independent Neonatal Care Courses in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. UK instructors are now needed only to teach the generic instructor course (GIC Steps 7 to 9). NICHE International delivered another GIC in 2024 along with an Instructor Development Program to further the professional development of Cameroonian Instructors.

UGANDA

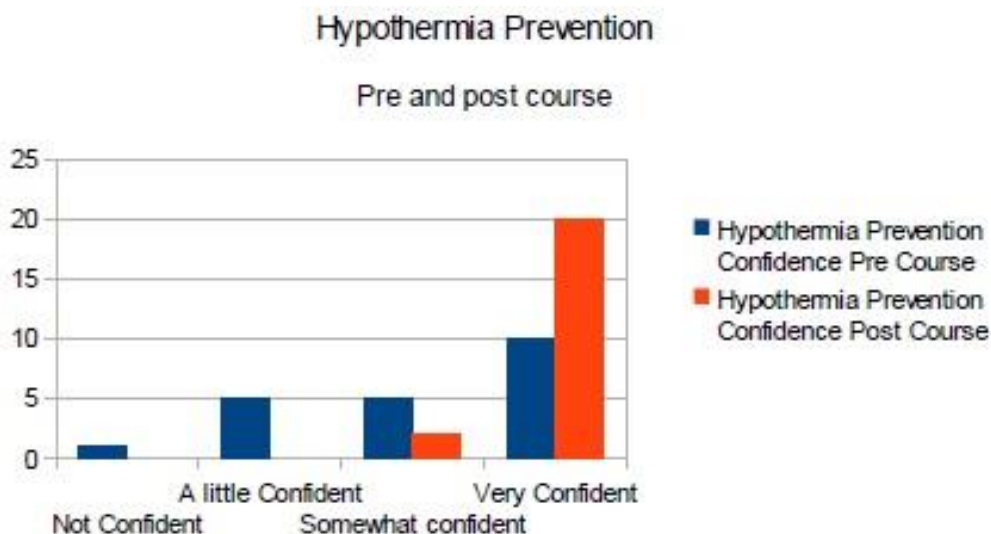
Training trips to Uganda took place in February 2022, and February 2023. In October 2023, Ugandan Instructors who had completed the GIC in Feb 2023 ran their own NCC with remote support online from some NICHE International trainers.

Impact in West Africa:

- Number of trained practitioners to date 400
- Number of trained trainers 30
- Number of babies cared for by NCC trained practitioners (@ 1,000 per annum per practitioner) 300,000

If each healthcare professional keeps his/her skills up to date and works for 20 years and the local instructors run even one course per annum between them, something akin to 8,800,000 new born babies will have been cared for by NCC trained practitioners by the time this first cohort of local instructors retires.

We have observed improvements in practice, for example in hand washing and in the introduction of skin-to-skin care. Feedback from candidates on the courses is collected, and training modified accordingly; sessions on handwashing techniques, intraosseous needle insertion, CPAP and the oxygen concentrator have all been added or extended over the years. A reduction in neonatal mortality is not easy to statistically prove so we collect data about confidence levels prior to and after the courses. It is known that an increase in confidence does lead to an increase in competence because it empowers the clinician to employ acquired skills.



We are particularly pleased that we are now in a position to take our senior instructor colleagues from Cameroon and Liberia with us to other African countries. Their clinical experiences are closer to those of the healthcare workers we train, as well as the obvious cultural connectors. This shared learning and non-hierarchical collaboration has been an unplanned bonus to NICHE International's projects.

What drives us on as a charity is that, whilst it is very hard to measure the economic outcomes of this work, the human value and potential for lives saved is immense. **The cost of the project to date works out as significantly less than 1p per baby safely seen through the first 28 days of life** which seems a very small price to pay.

Finances:

Our funding comes from charitable trusts, community and individual fundraising and grant giving bodies. There are no employees and no business premises. Costs are for volunteer expenses, training equipment, course manuals and support for local candidates and local instructors overseas.

Accountability:

In common with all CIOs, NICHE International submits annual accounts and reports to the Charities Commission and reports can be produced for individual funders as required.

The annual report and accounts can be found on the charity commission website. <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk> Number 1174977

Summary of costs:

Each overseas trip for NICHE £10,000 to 12,000

This includes travel for UK instructors and all expenses for local instructors and instructor candidates.

Replacement training equipment per annum £1,000

In 2024 /2025 NICHE International intends to do the following: (depends on funds)

February 2024	Cameroon	1 GIC & 1 IDP	4 UK instructors, 1 educator
October 2024	Uganda	2 NCCs	2 UK instructors
April/May 2025	Cameroon	1 IDP	2-4 UK instructors
November 2025	Uganda	1 GIC and 2 NCCs	5 UK instructors
Total cost of this 2-year programme:			£ 48,000

GIC Generic Instructor Course. IDP Instructor Development Programme
NCC Neonatal Care Course

If less money is forthcoming, we can cut down on the number of learners or trips but still have a positive, lasting impact on newborn wellbeing.