

Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa

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Dear colleagues,

In 2018 we saw many successes.

Research teams are in the middle of their project implementation, and we are starting to see concrete impacts such as improvements of the quality of care in pilot health facilities and changes in attitudes and behaviours within participating communities.

Collaboration between the Health Policy and Research Organisations (HPROs) and the research teams was strengthened on several fronts. For example, in terms of technical capacity, a gender and equity training was organized by the African Population and Health Research Centre and attended by 26 researchers representing 13 teams. Also, collaborative knowledge translation activities helped to integrate research results into policies and practice. In addition to the shared learning and successes, these collaborative activities increase visibility of Innovating for Maternal and Child Health (IMCHA) initiative and the value of the full cohort of projects.

IMCHA teams attended several events and actively communicated their work. For example, the first [Nigeria Research Days for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health](#) were co-organized by the West Africa HPRO (the West African Health Organization) and the Federal Ministry of Health of Nigeria. IMCHA was also well-represented at major international conferences such as the [Canadian Conference on Global Health](#) in Toronto in November and at the [Fifth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research](#) in Liverpool in October, where the work of several research teams was showcased.

IMCHA's mid-term evaluation confirmed positive results, such as the close collaborations with the

communities and the fruitful involvement of decision-makers in the projects, as well as satisfaction with IDRC's supervision of the initiative and strong support and flexibility from IDRC/IMCHA program officers. A few areas for improvement were also identified. These include the need to improve the integration of gender and equity considerations, which will be an area of focus to strengthen IMCHA in the year ahead.

We hope that strong results will continue to be demonstrated in the coming year and that our common work will be even more successful and productive.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous new year. We look forward to continuing our work with all of you in 2019.

Sincerely,
Montasser Kamal and the IMCHA team

Research in action

Women leading change for better antenatal care in Tanzania

Women's groups in rural Tanzania are taking the lead in the search for sustainable, culturally relevant strategies to improve access to and use of better antenatal care services.

[READ THE STORY](#)



News

Strong IMCHA participation at the Canadian Conference on Global Health

More than 30 people (twice as many as last year) showcased IMCHA's work in five symposia, four panel sessions, and two posters at the [Canadian Conference on Global Health](#) in Toronto (November 19-21). The 2018 edition of this unique Canadian conference focused on the theme "Fragile Environments and Global Health: Examining drivers of change". IMCHA presenters spoke to this theme by highlighting that even in fragile settings, high quality maternal and child health systems research can lead to progress in terms of access to and provision of quality services. Furthermore, they underscored that community engagement and culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive interventions should not be jeopardized, even in situations of fragility.

Colleagues honoured for leadership roles in global health

IMCHA is proud to see several team members and researchers recognized in the first ever [List of Canadian women leaders in global health](#) and [List of Francophone women leaders in global health](#), both released at the end of 2018. These lists were inspired by a broader global movement to recognize the achievements and expertise of women in global health. Congratulations to all of the nominees!

Health Systems Global launches an Africa Regional Network

Health Systems Global created a group of Africa-based networks in December 2018. The intention of the networks is to share learning and build synergies to increase impact and influence in the region. The African network also offers space for debate and exchange, funding and training opportunities, and much more.

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Featured publications

Perceptions and experiences related to health and health inequality among rural communities in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia: a rapid qualitative assessment

"The Safe Motherhood Research Project studies the implementation and scale-up of maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) initiatives in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. This qualitative rapid assessment study was undertaken to explore community perceptions and experiences related to health, health inequality, and other MNCH themes."

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

How culture shapes the sexual and reproductive health practices among adolescent girls in Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan

“From 2011 to 2014, a programme aimed to improve sexual and reproductive health practices among adolescent girls was implemented by the non-governmental organization BRAC in partnership with the Government of South Sudan and with funding from the World Bank. The distinctive culture and norms in South Sudan offered unique challenges to the implementation of such a programme, which this study sought to explore.”

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Digital health, gender and health equity: invisible imperatives

“A growing body of evidence shows the use of digital technologies in health — referred to as eHealth, mHealth, or digital health — is improving and saving lives in low and middle-income countries. Despite this prevalent and persistent narrative, very few studies examine its effects on health equity, gender, and power dynamics. This journal supplement addresses these invisible imperatives by going beyond traditional measures of coverage, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness associated with digital health interventions to unpack different experiences of health workers and beneficiaries.”

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Moving towards UHC: engaging non-state providers

“Non-state providers (NSPs) of health services – including actors ranging from informal providers, faith-based groups, non-governmental organizations, as well as the formal private sector – play a major role in the delivery of services in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). As universal health coverage (UHC) has become a priority for the global health community, understanding the role of various NSPs and how they contribute to reaching this goal is critical.”

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Innovating for Maternal and Child Health

The Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa initiative seeks to improve maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes by strengthening health systems, using primary healthcare as an entry point. This seven-year, \$36 million initiative is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Global Affairs Canada, and IDRC.

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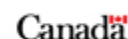
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