

ESSENTIAL LIFE SAVING SKILLS FOR AFRICA  
CHAIRPERSONS REPORT YEAR 2022-2023  
DR PAUL WEIR

2022-2023 proved to be a challenging and disappointing year, but has set the charity up to make progress in the incoming year.

The Trustees have met 3 -4 times through the year and faced some difficult decisions.

The 2022 EONC course had to be cancelled very late in the run in to the course because of a potential outbreak of EBOLA in South Sudan. This subsequently turned out to be an unfounded scare, such is the disinformation available on the internet. But even the risk of EBOLA in the Juba Teaching Hospital would have had consequences for the ELSSA team e.g. enforced travel restrictions or even having to quarantine either in Juba or on return to UK. Such potential consequences posed unacceptable risk to busy team members and so with regret the course was cancelled. I attempted to identify new dates to run an EONC courses in early 2023 but was informed indirectly by Dr Changkel that the dairy of activities and training in the PGC was such that the next available time would be November 2023

The current dates are week 1, 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> & week 2, 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> November plus travelling.

### **ESSENTIAL OBSTETRIC (MATERNAL) AND NEWBORN CARE COURSES (EONC)**

As I remarked last year the data on the efforts of the ELSSA teams in previous courses are remarkable and I make no apology for repeating them.

To date the ELSSA teams have EONC trained some 372 Health care staff in South Sudan comprising:- 205 Midwives; 153 Doctors and Associate specialists and 14 Midwifery Tutors (from JCONAM). In addition some progress has been made on the sustainability of EONC training with the initial training of 4 South Sudanese facilitators.

The 'Helping Babies Breathe' project has trained 192 midwives in HBB techniques and distributed 165 resuscitators in South Sudan. A local audit suggests that these Newborn 'bag and mask' resuscitators are being valued and used.

In my opinion all future courses should have a major focus on developing sustainability of training e.g. Training the Trainers activity in order to increase the sustainability of EONC training

Although the COVID pandemic has been downgraded it is still very much endemic with evidence of new variants. Essentially all the travelling team must be fully vaccinated and there may well have to be some form of screening of attendees e.g. antigen /lateral flow tests.

### **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN**

The current status of governance in Africa and in particular South Sudan must give rise to concern for future courses. In my view, the fact that there are now two ruling parties vying for power in Juba has increased the potential risks and instability. A sudden unpredictable deterioration in the security situation remains possible, and could be prompted by a number of factors including developments in the fragile economy or the ongoing peace process. Certainly, travel outside Juba cannot be contemplated except in an extreme emergency.

Although there is no apparent direct implication for South Sudan from the outbreak of civil war in Sudan, the ties between the two countries and the factions in South Sudan run deep and it is certainly possible that this situation could result in increased tension between the ruling parties in South Sudan, with the potential of destabilisation and conflict.

This risk profile will need to be kept under constant scrutiny prior to departure. Any planned courses would have to be prepared to cancel at short notice if circumstances change. As always, each member of the ELSSA team would have to carefully consider how such an event would affect them. ELSSA will have to develop an exit plan in case of an emergency and explore alternative exit routes.

### **EONC IN SOUTH SUDAN AND THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS POSTGRADUATE CENTER; JUBA TEACHING HOSPITAL.**

The death of Dr Frederick Khamis Tawad and the replacement of Dr Reik as Minister of Health means that the partnership that had been developed has largely dissipated and so ELSSA will have to seek to develop new contacts and relationships within the College of Physicians and Surgeons of South Sudan. The ELSSA team will have to establish cordial relationships with the new PGC Director; Dr Changkel and his training committee.

Equally it will be important to seek to develop a cordial and supportive network with the South Sudan Midwifery association and JCONAM.

The new group - 'Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist of South Sudan' appears to be grouping of more 'junior' professionals, not associated directly with the CPS SS. They appear to have held successful conferences and so it will be important to try and establish contacts and relationships with this group.

It will be a major challenge for any future team to build a new network of supportive relationships.

### **EONC EQUIPMENT**

Following the AGM last year 170 neonatal resuscitators, 2 Neonatal mannequins and a Preminatal mannequin were purchased from Laerdal, cost was £5518. This means we should have approx. 205 neonatal resuscitators to distribute as well as 4 NeoNatalie training kits

As I remarked last year, some of the teaching equipment and mannequins need to be replaced and some additional equipment would be needed if it is decided to run EONC courses in other countries or regions. This would mean that we would need to acquire or purchase equipment. I would appeal to our supporters that if they are aware of teaching equipment being replaced or disposed of, that they would consider suggesting that it would be donated to ELSSA. If you are planning a fund-raising project consider the purchase of specific mannequins and pieces of equipment as a primary fundraising goal, as this often appeals to donors.

### **FUNDING**

I am grateful to Gary Dorman's 'GoFundme' effort, which I know was heavily supported by many of you, our team, as well as many others. Also we continue to receive generous support from the Ardbarron trust for which we are very grateful. Ardbarron Trust have recently indicated that they may be willing to further support us this year.

In view of the recession and the squeeze on incomes, fund raising for projects such as ours will be difficult but I must encourage you to redouble fund raising efforts over the next few months.

The Trustees continue to attempt to identify sources of funding and will keep you informed if there are ways in which you can help,

We have had to move our donation platform to Enthuse, this platform facilitates donating and fund-raising projects and it facilitates the GiftAid process. One drawback has arisen, the site 'requests' a 'contribution or tip' to Enthuse, and suggests 12%. I am in the process of placing a warning on our donation page to warn donors that this 'contribution' is not necessary.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The ELSSA internet site, Facebook Page and Twitter accounts all of which were somewhat underutilised. I would encourage you to get involved with these media platforms and actively use them to promote your interest in ELSSA and any fund-raising activities that you plan.

I sincerely hope that 2023 will see the re-establishment of Essential Skills Training in Africa.



Dr Paul Weir  
Chairperson  
June 2023