



University of
Lancashire



26TH INTERNATIONAL NORMAL LABOUR AND BIRTH RESEARCH CONFERENCE ACCRA, GHANA -2027

A CONCEPT NOTE

THEME: Reimagining Birth in Africa: Evidence, Innovation, and Interdisciplinary Pathways to Universal Access

Steering Group Partners:



Boston University School of Public Health



Hong Kong Midwives Association



NYU

RORY MEYERS
COLLEGE OF NURSING



1. Introduction

The International Normal Labour and Birth Research Conference Series is an annual event established and chaired by Professor Soo Downe at the University of Lancashire in the UK. The conference series, which started in 2001, has a primary focus on physiological labour and birth, but the scope of the Series extends to differing contexts, access to and models of care and national or international policy related to maternal healthcare.

Recent conferences have also sought to highlight social inequalities, the benefits of continuity of care and the occurrence of abuse and mistreatment of women in maternity care¹. In 2027, the organizers seek to hold the first of these conferences in Africa to create the opportunity for taking a deeper dive into the African research, policy and practice perspectives around physiological labour and normal birth as well as related factors that speak to progress, maternity professional development, challenges and future repositioning in the face of innovation, climate change and multidisciplinary research.

2. Purpose, Aim and Objectives

In 2027, healthcare practitioners in Africa, including their diverse global stakeholders ranging from midwives, paediatric and neonatal nurses, medical specialists, public health physicians/practitioners, anthropologists, researchers, maternal and newborn advocates, development partners, philanthropic organizations as well as medical product companies will convene to discuss factors around sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health (SRMNAH) care in Africa.

Cutting edge evidence on physiological labour, childbirth and quality improvements in care will be presented by African and other international speakers and researchers.

Aim

To create a platform for global stakeholder engagement in progress towards universal access to SRMNAH with relevance to physiological labour, childbirth, new evidence, successes in practice and research; innovative strategies in workforce deployment as well as new exemplifying technologies applicable to quality improvements in health care in Africa.

¹ <https://maternityandmidwifery.co.uk/review-making-birth-better-bringing-together-evidence-knowledge-and-experience-international-labour-and-birth-research-conference-2025/> accessed 12.1.2025

Specific Objectives

To:

- *Articulate the topical global and regional developments of interest to physiological labour, birth and midwifery practice in Africa and trajectory of successes and challenges*
- *Appraise current strategies in universal health access in SRMNAH and implications for physiological labour, birth and improvement strategies*
- *Examine health inequities and related government policies and programs to proffer solutions to improve labour and childbirth outcomes*
- *Model women's health initiatives in advocacy and practice for wider adoption*
- *Document climate change occurrences, effects and ongoing research evidence for re-setting health care policies and practices agenda*
- *Explore new technologies and innovations for quality improvements in physiologic labour and childbirth outcomes*
- *Create a platform for wider stakeholder networking and forging interdisciplinary alliances for health care improvements and research in Africa*

Presentation of existing research evidence will be a cross-cutting feature of all the objectives

3. THEME:

Reimagining Birth in Africa: Evidence, Innovation, and Interdisciplinary Pathways to Universal Access

4. Methods and abstract tracks

a. Initiation

- Concept note finalization
- Key planning meetings of global and local conference organizing committees (COC)
- Consultations/drafting/reviews/branding/promotion

b. Thematic Areas

- Universal access
- Policy, advocacy and practice
- Midwifery Models of Care
- Evidence (research) and practice

- Women's health,
- Health inequities
- New technology and innovations
- Networking and interdisciplinary alliances/collaborations
- Climate change and maternal, newborn and adolescent health

c. Pre-conference and conference

Opportunities for :

- Consultations
- Stakeholder engagement for participation and sponsorships
- Abstract submission and selection
- Registration
- Accommodation/participant arrivals
- Pre-conference workshops
- Opening ceremony
- Plenary sessions
- Simultaneous presentations
- Daily keynote presentations
- Syndicate sessions
- Workshops
- Exhibitions
- Networking forums

5. Target Audience

- Policy makers and Government stakeholders
- Midwives (policy, practice, academia, programs, association, regulation)
- Paediatric and neonatal nurses,
- Medical specialists, public health physicians/practitioners,
- Anthropologists, researchers, maternal and newborn advocates,
- Development partners, philanthropic organizations as well as medical product companies
- Newly recruited midwives and students

6. Proposed Collaborators and Sponsors

- University of Lancashire and the International Normal Labour and Birth Steering Committee
- Quality Maternal and Newborn Care Research Alliance
- Gates Foundation
- United Nations Population Fund- Ghana and Africa Region (UNFPA)
- World Health Organization -Ghana and AFRO Region
- International Confederation of Midwives (ICM)
- African Union
- West Africa Health Organization (WAHO)

- International Development Organizations
- JHPIEGO
- Centre for Health Development and Research (CEHDAR)
- Ministry of Health-Ghana (MOH-GH)
- Ghana Registered Midwives Association (GRMA)
- Ghana Registered Nurses and Midwives Association (GRMNA)
- Etc.

7. Preparatory Timelines

January 2026 -Sept 2027

8. Expected Outcomes

- Interest and best practices generated from topical areas
- Action points for in-country improvements generated
- New technologies and innovations identified for wider impact
- Networks for research established
- University of Lancashire-CEHDAR-HEALTH ORGANIZATION PARTNERSHIPS cemented for diverse collaborations