

- **Title:** Berbice Regional Blood Bank Saves Mother's Lives
- **Institution:** Berbice Regional Health Authority
- **Country:** Guyana
- **Category:** Regional
- **Duration:** 1 year
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A recurring problem affecting pregnant women and new mothers in Guyana is anemia, an iron deficiency that contributes to the higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, particularly through hemorrhage during delivery. In Guyana, 34% of pregnant females and 21% of lactating mothers have iron deficiency, and in 2006 those rates were significantly higher in the Berbice region located on the coastal belt, where 90% of the Guyana population resides.

To address the high rates of anemia and hemorrhage in the maternity wards, the Berbice Regional Health Authority has implemented regional blood banks for the New Amsterdam and Georgetown hospitals that have the capacity to serve all pregnant women and mothers in the region. Following construction of the blood bank and the installment of appropriate technology, efforts to ensure the appropriate clinical use of blood saw the development and launch of guidelines on clinical use of blood in April, 2009. Aside from increasing hospital maternity care capacity through the blood banks, health professionals in the region are being trained in clinical protocols, which will enable them to continue to adequately solve maternal health problems associated with anemia.

The two public maternity facilities at New Amsterdam and Georgetown Hospitals both have the standards to resolve cases of anemia and the capacity to properly address cases of hemorrhage during and after delivery. Currently, 75% of Guyana's blood demand is being met; an increase from just 22% in 2005. While 68% of all blood donations are now voluntary, it is expected that 100% of all blood donations will be of voluntary donation by the year 2012, significantly reducing the risks to safe blood supply. Both hospitals are now able to replenish the blood volume of anemic patients in accordance with the figures given by the laboratory tests that are carried out in both facilities, resulting in an expected decrease in anemia in pregnant women from 54% to 30%. Proper treatment for anemia has ultimately resulted in a decrease in the incidence of postpartum hemorrhage and maternal mortality due to hemorrhage in the region.

Due to the success of the Berbice Regional Health Authority's program, workshop trainings for post-partum hemorrhage have been developed and implemented in regions 4, 6, 7 and the Guyana Nurse College.