



# NICHE International - Business Plan 2025-2027

## Executive Summary

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 and Liberia and Uganda. We have partnerships with local health organisations and other UK based charities that work in these countries.

The charity is run by volunteers, the majority of whom are medically trained. 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 Cameroon, Liberia and Uganda 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 newborn 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 2024 stood at 3/1,000. Cameroon's was 26/1,000, Liberia's 30/1,000 and Uganda 18/1,000

(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.

**Aim:** 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.

**Objectives:**

- To teach Neonatal Care provider courses to frontline practitioners from all sectors of health care in Cameroon, Uganda and other low- and middle- income countries.
- To promote 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. There are also 2 co-opted charity members, one from Cameroon and one from N. Ireland, who attend Trustee meetings. Trustees have experience working for teaching and medical charities in Cameroon, Uganda, Liberia and other resource poor countries, in project management, post- graduate teaching, IT and business. All 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 Neonatal Care Course (NCC) was designed by ALSG ([www.alsg.org](http://www.alsg.org)) and the charity Maternal and Childhealth Advocacy International ([www.mcai.org](http://www.mcai.org)) especially for resource limited settings, and it has been further adapted by the NICHE International instructors over the years, most recently in 2024/5. The NCC uses simple equipment, and emphasises basic care, concentrating on those areas identified by the World Health Organisation which contribute most to neonatal mortality. Recent updates to the course have increased the number of interactive workshops and added e-learning modules. These are available on phones for candidates without access to computers. 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 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. The GIC requires an educator on each course, and GIC educators have so far been international colleagues. The charity's aim is to find and support local educators to make the courses completely sustainable.

## **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. 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 maintaining a link with ALSG.

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:**

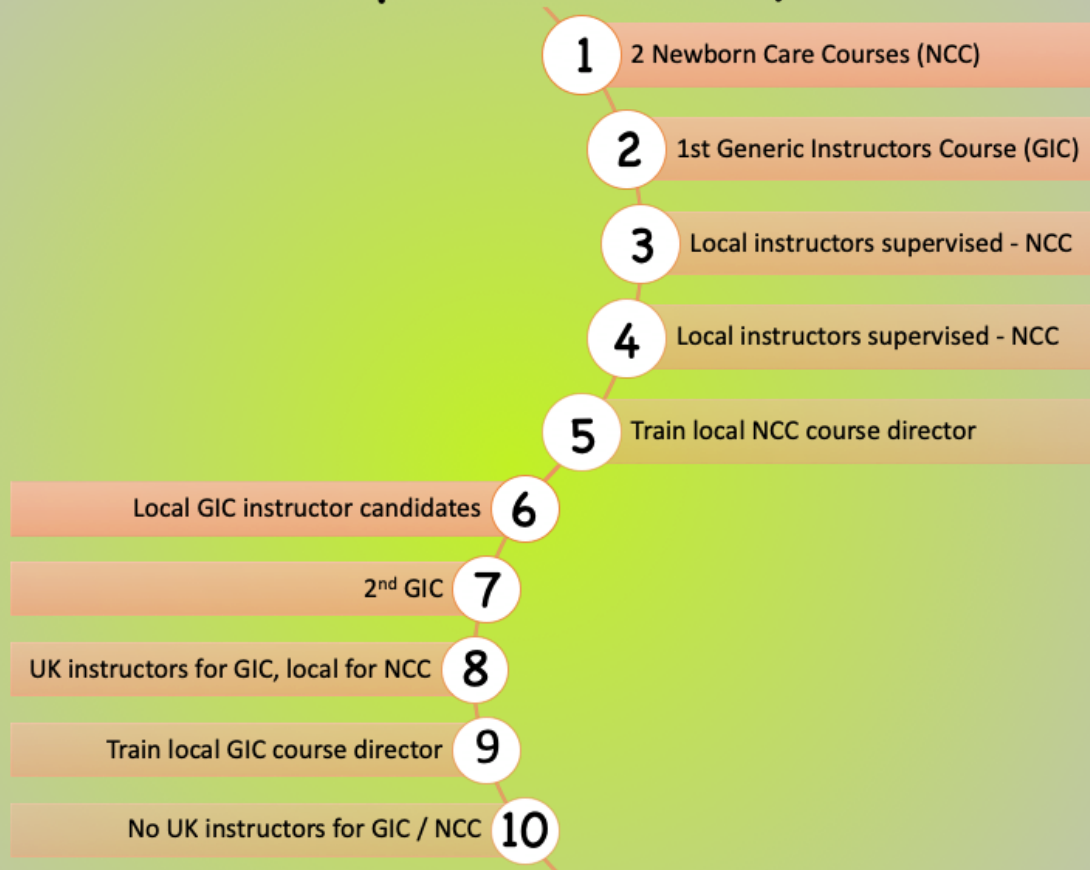
Aware that resuscitation skills in particular decline over time and that one-off infrequent courses are not sustainable, NICHE International instructors have devised a 10-step route to local NCC faculty development and training self-sufficiency, which starts with delivery of a first provider course, and ends with a country having its own faculty to teach the courses and develop further instructors

A further step is to help trained instructors with their continuous professional development regarding teaching, just as UK Instructors are also expected to maintain their standards.

To facilitate this, Instructor Development Days were delivered in Cameroon 2022 and 2024.

[Truly Sustainable Training – NICHE International](#)

## 10 Steps to Sustainability



### 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. Further courses were delivered in January 2025.

### LIBERIA

There are 8 fully trained local instructors in Liberia, one of whom can course direct. The instructors are currently teaching the skills to new neonatal nurse technicians in short sessions.

### CAMEROON

Cameroon is NICHE's most established project. There are now 32 fully trained Cameroonian instructors who are very active in continuing the training without any UK instructors on the ground. UK instructors are now only needed in Cameroon to teach the generic instructor course (GIC Steps 7 to 9), and to support and develop the local instructors.

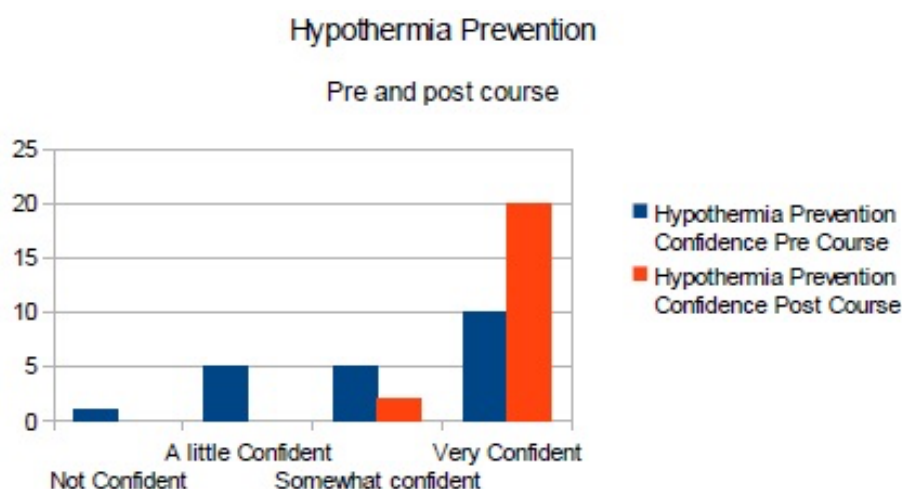
### Impact in West Africa:

- Number of trained practitioners to date 345
- Number of trained trainers 32
- Number of babies cared for by NCC trained practitioners (@ 1,000 per annum per practitioner) 300,000

- Number of babies passing through skilled hands over 20 years 8.8 million

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 newborn 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 mother 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 try the skills they have learned.



We have been able 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 people we are delivering this training to than our own and their teaching styles and accents might also be more culturally appropriate than ours. This shared learning and non-hierarchical collaboration has been an unplanned bonus to NICHE International's projects.

Our programme organiser in Cameroon visited UK in 2023. This gave her the opportunity to update her own training and to see something of neonatal care here. She offered some training in skin-to-skin mother care to neonatal nurses.

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:

Funding for the training comes from charitable trusts, community and individual fundraising and grant giving bodies. There are no employees and no business premises. The 7 trustees run the charity in a voluntary capacity. Costs are for volunteers' travel and expenses, training equipment, course manuals and contributions to travel expenses for local candidates and local instructors overseas.

|                                |                    |               |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Funds held as of OCTOBER 2024: | Restricted         | £16,921       |
|                                | Unrestricted funds | £10,026       |
|                                |                    | <hr/> £26,947 |

**Summary of costs:** Each training trip costs around £12,000 – 14,000, which includes:

1. Expenses for 4 or 5 UK Instructors, to include travel, visas, insurance, immunisations.
2. Replacement teaching equipment, and equipment to leave in country for ongoing training.
3. Administrative expenses for courses: manuals, certificates, photocopying etc.
4. Contribution to travel and subsistence of local instructors. (N.B. we do not pay per diems)

**Plans for next two years:**

1. A new partnership with the organisation ‘Community Empowerment Lab’ (CEL), which is an academic organisation in Varanasi, North-East India. CEL has extensive research data on maternal and neonatal mortality that would give us the opportunity to collect accurate outcome data and measure the impact of our training program. The training would be for community health workers, who are a bridge between the health system and the community. The neonatal mortality rate in this region of India is 28 per 1000 live births.
2. Continue to train and support new instructors in Cameroon and work further to establish a local educator there.
3. Continue to run NCCs and to train more instructors in Uganda. Work with local instructors to modify the NCC for students from the nurse training school t Bwindi Hospital, who are offered this course just before they qualify

**Accountability:**

In common with all CIOs, NICHE International submits annual accounts and reports to the Charities Commission and reports are provided to individual funders as required. The annual report for the CIO's 7<sup>th</sup>-year appears as Appendix 1 and the accounts to October 2024 are available on the Charity Commission website. [NEWBORN, INFANT AND CHILD HEALTH EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL \(ALSO KNOWN AS NICHE INTERNATIONAL\) - 1174977](#)

**Strengths and challenges (with solutions):**

**Strengths:**

- Significant expertise and experience of the volunteer instructors
- Experience and skills of all the NICHE trustees which is freely given
- Partnership with ALSG (educational and academic rigour)
- Partnership with CBCHS (increased chance of sustainability with this influential and committed local partner)
- Sustainability with reduced costs. As local instructors are trained, fewer UK instructors are needed
- Strong, successful formula to the courses which can be taken anywhere in the world thereby promoting the achievement of sustainable high-quality health care.
- Good supply of enthusiastic, well trained and highly motivated volunteer instructors willing and able to give small aliquots of their time to this project which they feel is rewarding and worthwhile. Their involvement in courses overseas “counts” towards the time that ALSG and RC(UK) require them to do to maintain their instructor status.



- Fairly low-cost project with high impact, including positively influencing infant mortality rates.

### **Challenges and solutions:**

- *Challenge:* Resuscitation skills need to be practised regularly to ensure maintenance of knowledge. *Solution:* local refresher courses using equipment which NICHE leaves in country.
- *Challenge:* newborn care skills need local champions for attitudes and practices to be well embedded over time and to coordinate local instructors' activities and maintenance of their skills. *Solution:* we have a local champion in the countries where we are currently active and would only accept an invitation to a new country if a similarly enthusiastic, inspirational and influential person was willing to take on this role.
- *Challenge:* Continued civil unrest in the English-speaking areas of Cameroon and FCO advice against travel there. *Solution:* we mitigated this on-going risk by moving courses to the French speaking areas such as Yaounde or Douala. Instructors from the Anglophone Regions have travelled there. Some UK instructors as well as local instructors speak French which helps the Yaoundé based learners whose first language is often French. Ongoing conflict remains a concern.
- *Challenge:* the GIC requires an educator who must hold a postgraduate qualification in adult education. *Solution:* We have identified a potential local educator in Cameroon and are working on the further training that she needs.
- *Challenge:* we need more robust outcome measures to objectively prove the worth of this project and to secure funding in the future. Data on neonatal mortality and stillbirths are collected in the anglophone regions but the current political problems in Cameroon mean that data are not clean. *Solution:* Potential partnership with an academic organization in India (see above)

### **APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1                      Annual report 2023-2024

[NEWBORN, INFANT AND CHILD HEALTH EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL \(ALSO KNOWN AS NICHE INTERNATIONAL\) - 1174977](#)

Appendix 2                      10 steps to self-supporting faculty development

[NCC-faculty-Development.pdf](#)

