



## **BABY SLEEP; EXPLORING SLEEP OPTIONS FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED NEWBORNS IN THE KENYAN SLUMS**

# **(A CASE STUDY OF MUKURU KAYABA INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS)**

### **Overview**

Among the aspects of newborn well-being that is critical to the Toto Care Box program is promoting safe sleeping of newborns. This article explores the reasons why baby sleep is important, the recommendations for safe sleeping and the changes in baby sleep requirements with age. The article also includes the findings of a survey conducted by the Toto Care Box team on the state of newborn sleep among its clients (Residents of Mukuru Kayaba and areas neighboring Dream Centre).

### **Why baby sleep is important**

Baby sleep is important for various reasons; it facilitates the growth of the newborn, boosts their immunity as well as help in enhancing their learning and memory. For this reason, children need enough sleep.

### **Changes in baby sleep with age**

Children's sleep needs and patterns vary as they grow older. Generally, as a baby grows, the total amount of sleep slowly decreases. However, the length of nighttime sleep increases. Newborns are programmed to sleep in short bursts of about 2-3 hours between feeds both at night and during the day. They undergo 'active sleep' and 'quiet sleep'. During active sleep, newborns move around and can be seen jerking, twitching or sucking. Quiet sleep on the other hand is when the baby is still and breathing evenly. Newborns move through active and quiet sleep in cycles that last about 30-50 minutes. They might wake up after a sleep cycle and thus need help getting back to sleep. Newborns sleep about 8-9 hours in the daytime and about 8 hours at night (a total of about 16 hrs). Below is a table showing changes in baby sleep through to 2 years of age;

<b>AGE</b>	<b>Total Hours of Daytime Sleep</b>	<b>Total Hours of Nighttime Sleep</b>	<b>Total Sleep Hours</b>
Newborn	8 hours	8-9 hours	16 hours
1 Month Old	7 hours	8-9 hours	15.5 hours
3 Months Old	4-5 hours	9-10 hours	15 hours
6 Months Old	4 hours	10 hours	14 hours
9 Months- 1Year Old	3 hours	11 hours	14 hours
1.5 Years Old	2.5 hours	11 hours	13.5 hours
2 Years Old	2 hours	11 hours	13 hours

## Where should newborns sleep?

Where your baby sleeps is a personal choice often determined by your own family's needs and the situation at hand. Some individuals choose 'co-sleeping', that is where parents sleep in the same bed/ share the bed with their babies. This choice is often dependent on reasons whether cultural or tied to family needs and circumstances. Others choose to sleep on separate beds with their babies but in the same room. Whichever choice is made, care should be taken to ensure the baby gets a satisfying and safe sleep experience.

## Expert recommendations on ideal newborn sleep

The Raising Children Network (an Australian Parenting Website) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) make the following recommendations regarding newborn sleep;

Parents should sleep with their newborn in a cot next to their bed for the first 6-12 months of their life. This has proved to reduce the risk of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) and fatal sleeping accidents. Other advantages of sleeping on separate beds with your newborn include;

- It lets you be close to and respond quickly when your baby wakes.
- You can check on your baby whenever you want during the night.
- Since baby movements can be disturbing to a parent sleeping in the same bed with the baby, sleeping on separate beds allows the mother to have better sleep with less distraction.
- It is easier to start babies off in their own beds than to change their sleeping arrangements at a later stage.

Experts are against the idea of co-sleeping especially where the baby is born premature or when the parents sharing the bed with the newborn are smokers. This would greatly affect the development of the baby and may give room to complications.

Recommendations on the ideal newborn bed include;

It should be made using a firm and even mattress that is covered by a tightly fitted sheet. This helps reduce the risk of suffocation and physical injury. Loose beddings including pillows, comforters and bumper pads should not be used because they often cause strangulation, entrapment or suffocation.

## The Toto Care Box Baby sleep Survey

### Purpose of the survey

Toto Care Box being seriously concerned about the state of newborn sleep among the residents of informal settlements in Nairobi particularly Mukuru Kayaba slums decided to carry out an



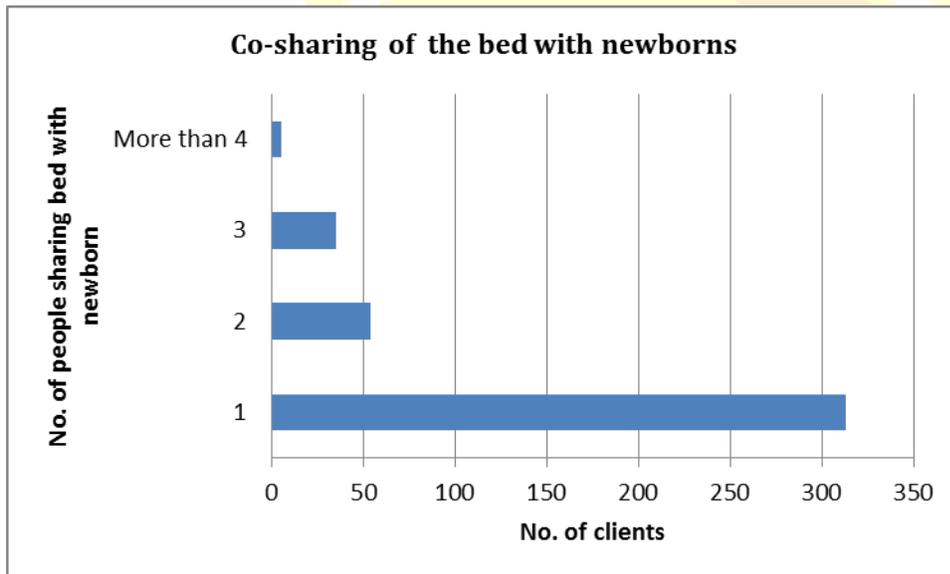
investigative survey. The survey was conducted between 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018 and 24<sup>th</sup> Jul 2019 and involved a sample of 407 respondents. Of these, 314 were residents of Mukuru Kayaba settlements while the remaining 93 were residents of the area neighboring Dream Centre in Lang'ata. The purpose of the survey was; to find out the exact number of people who share a bed with the newborn per household, the proportion of individuals who sleep on the floor with their newborns/ do not have a bed and finally to gauge the success of Toto Care Box in providing an alternative safe sleeping bed for the newborns.

## Findings of the survey

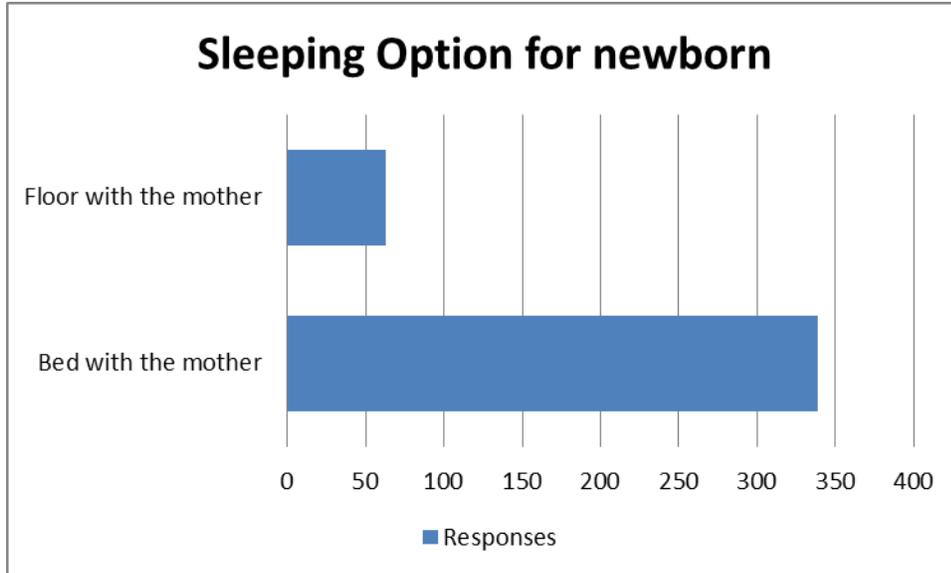
### Number of people sharing a bed with the newborn

Of all the 407 respondents interviewed;

- 314 (77.1%) confirmed that their newborn shares the bed with only one person (the mother).
- 54 (13.3%) confirmed that their newborn shares the bed with two other people.
- 35 (8.6%) confirmed that their newborn shares the bed with three other people.
- 5 (1.2%) confirmed that their newborn shares the bed with four or more other people.

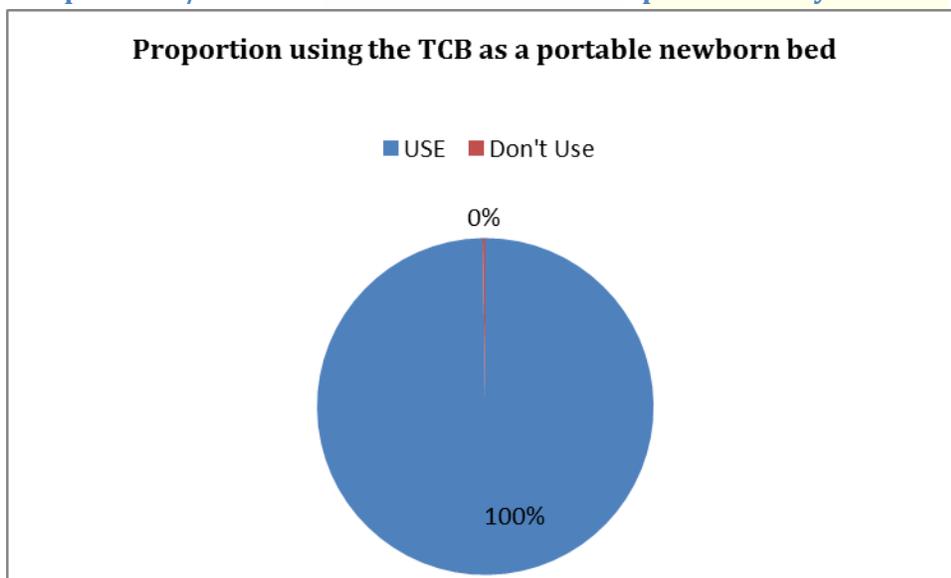


### Proportion of people sleeping on the bed/floor with their newborns



- 339 respondents (84.5%) confirmed to be owning and sleeping on the bed with their newborn. The remaining 63 respondents (15.7%) confirmed to be sleeping on the floor with their newborn because they do not own a bed.

### The potential/success of the Toto Care Box as a portable baby bed

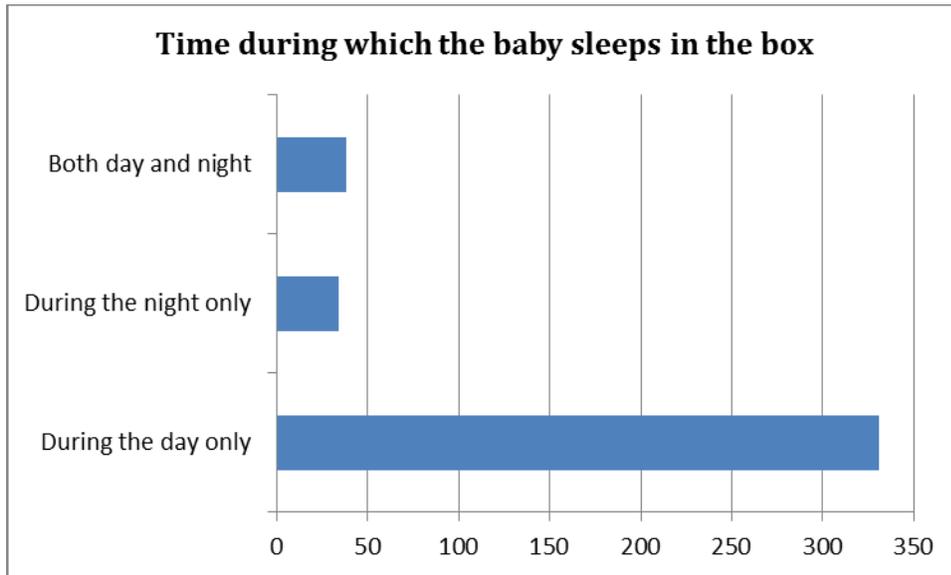


From the responses recorded;



- All the 407 clients confirmed to have used the Toto Care Box as a baby bed whether during the day or at night. This translated to 100% success in the use of the TCB as a portable newborn bed.

The details of when the baby sleeps in the box are presented in the graph below;



- 331 of the clients (82.1%) confirmed to be using the box as a newborn bed only during the day.
- 34 clients (8.4%) confirmed to be using the box as a newborn bed only at night.
- 38 clients (9.4%) confirmed to be using the box as a newborn bed both during the day and at night.

## Conclusions

Having explored the requirements for ideal newborn sleep as well as the actual situation among the vulnerable and underprivileged residents of informal settlements, it is worth concluding that; Toto Care Box provides a safe alternative for ideal baby sleep to the residents of informal settlements saving them the struggle of sleeping on cold floors or on congested beds together with their newborns. The firm mattress together with the warm undersheet and the blanket are good enough to give the newborns comfort and start off their sleep life with dignity.