

# Improving Access and Quality in Maternal Health Care in Sub Saharan Africa

## Main partners:

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## Objectives:

### **The main objectives are:**

a) To establish a knowledge base around maternal health services in selected areas in the two countries, in order to have targeted efforts to improve access and quality. If the policy aim is to increase utilization of such services, improved capacity and quality is essential. b) To build research and policy capacity in selected key personnel in maternal health in teaching institutions in Malawi and Tanzania. c) Knowledge production to strengthen health systems for effective delivery of maternal and newborn/child health.

### **The specific objectives are:**

To develop tools to monitor and improve quality of maternal health services in health institutions as an ongoing activity. To establish functioning problem solving health information systems in institutions, districts and beyond. To analyze the main causes of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity, and link these causes to service delivery. To determine areas where women can be empowered in relation to seeking and getting health services promptly when needed.

To calculate case fatality rates and maternal morbidity burden at facility level as an indicator of quality improvements. To determine obstacles to the use of reproductive health services for marginalized women (poor, young, unmarried, rural).

To understand gender dimensions in reproductive health, and to understand obstacles to male involvement and to increase their role in maternal health service delivery.

## Results:

### **Ph.D. candidates by funding**

Awarding Institution	NUFU/NOMA		Quota funding		Other funding		Total	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
University of Oslo, Department of Community Medicine	3						3	
University of Oslo, Department of Informatics	3						3	

## **Results:**

The PhD candidates have completed data collection and are working on publications. Several papers are already submitted.

### **Short presentation of Ph.D. projects at KCN:**

#### **Male involvement in maternal health care in rural and urban settings in Malawi by Lucy Kululanga**

The design of the study involves descriptive explorative sequential mixed methods. Consequently, data collection will be in two phases. The initial phase will involve elicitation and analysis of qualitative data. The second phase will involve elicitation and analysis of quantitative data. The findings of these two phases will be then integrated during the interpretation phase. The purpose of this strategy is to explore the phenomenon of male involvement in maternal health care and then test the emerging themes from the qualitative data in order to determine their distribution within a chosen population. Qualitative data collection tools will include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with community leaders, married men and women and health care workers in maternity health facilities. Quantitative data collection will be done through a cross-sectional survey of married men and women in order to quantify the salient core themes that will emerge from the qualitative data.

#### **Quality of perinatal care and perinatal outcomes in a health facility and a rural community in Malawi by Lily Kumbani**

The study will provide knowledge on the current practices of perinatal care and impact on perinatal outcomes. The data will demonstrate whether care provided during pregnancy, labour and delivery and immediately after delivery of the neonate is appropriate and consistent with essential newborn care that is known to be associated with neonatal survival. The study will also provide information on the outcomes of institutional and community normal deliveries which will be a reflection on quality of neonatal care that is provided.

The results could be used by policy makers in Ministry of Health to help strengthen implementation of essential neonatal interventions in health facilities and in the community as a way of improving neonatal care. As part of this study the findings will be used to come up with a neonatal audit which could be adapted by health facilities for use in improving provision of neonatal care from the time a woman is pregnant to delivery and thereafter to the neonate.

#### **Reproductive decisions of couples living with HIV in Malawi by Belinda Chimphamba Gombachika**

Worldwide, health improvements have occurred with the advent of antiretroviral therapy (ART/ARV) over the last decades resulting in; dramatic reductions in HIV related morbidity & mortality and improvements in quality of life. Research indicates that this may encourage PLWH to reconsider their reproductive decisions in favour of re-marrying and childbearing. In view of these, a qualitative study was conducted with couples living with HIV. Informants were recruited from two ART clinics involved in the treatment and care of PLWH in patrilineal Chikwawa and matrilineal Chiradzulu districts located in southern Malawi. Data from the couples living with HIV was collected using in-depth interviews. While focus group discussions were conducted with; health care workers in order to obtain background information about the health services and the ART clinic and village elders in order to have an idea about the cultural values related to reproduction. The research will generate knowledge that will inform policy in the Ministry of Health and assist in designing appropriate interventions to improve the reproductive health of couples living with HIV.

## **Sustainability/further activities:**

To implement Helping Babies Breathe and Helping Mothers Survive training packages in nursing education (with Lærdal).

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