Resilience in Obstetric Skills - Uganda

Women in Uganda are nearly forty times more likely to die during childbirth than women in the UK.¹

Over the last decade there have been significant improvements in maternal mortality rates, however many women still die from preventable causes such as sepsis, pre-eclampsia and haemorrhage.

We know that healthcare providers (HCPs) play an essential role in preventing these deaths. Yet right now many HCPs working in obstetric care in Uganda feel stressed and unsupported in their work, and lack of training, high staff turnover, workforce shortages and high workloads are common. This is putting women’s health at risk and, in the worst cases, having a dramatic and even fatal impact on their lives.

Emergencies such as postpartum haemorrhage and infection require rapid and skilled obstetric interventions. Obstetric skills training for midwives, nurses and doctors, including opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) and formal task shifting, can drastically improve outcomes for women where resources are scarce.

¹ DHS, 2016

Our impact

Training in 5 facilities in Masaka District...

112 healthcare providers trained on emergency obstetric skills (EOS)

98% of trainees improved knowledge of emergency obstetric care

90% of trainees improved skills on partograph, Early Warning Score chart and neonatal resuscitation

Healthcare providers report feeling more confident to treat or refer women for maternity services

Increased access to quality maternity services for rural communities in Masaka

In 2 targeted hospitals:

87.5% of women were either satisfied or very satisfied with how they were treated by healthcare providers

99.2% of women would return for future services

99.6% of women would recommend the facilities to a friend
Our programme

We worked with local partners to improve obstetric care across five health facilities in Masaka District, Uganda. We did this by training midwives, nurses and doctors on emergency obstetric skills (EOS) to improve patient outcomes and enhance respectful care for women and girls. To establish and embed training at each facility, we adopted a training the trainers approach. This involved identifying and training Ugandan Master Trainers to enable them to teach the EOS course to their peers.

- We developed and implemented an intensive training course focused on improving clinical competencies in a range of obstetric procedures.
- We advocated for the provision of ongoing CPD for maternity services to sustain competency levels and increase staff satisfaction.
- We supported local partners to identify solutions to improve referral pathways, enabling faster referral of emergency cases and better communication between facilities.

“[From the training] I got all the skills I had gaps in, especially Manual Vacuum Aspiration and Early Warning Score, and I feel competent to handle everything from tomorrow!”

- Healthcare provider

By training healthcare providers to use partographs and Early Warning Score charts, we have equipped them with key skills in monitoring the progress of women during labour, identifying any deterioration in a woman’s condition and ensuring appropriate early intervention. Correct use of these tools can help to prevent and manage prolonged or obstructed labour and other serious complications such as a ruptured uterus, obstetric fistula and stillbirth. Combined with increased skills in neonatal resuscitation, HCPs are fully prepared to respond to emergencies and reduce the number of women and their newborns who die from obstetric complications.