



Perceptions about Transport for Maternal Health

About The Study

Quality maternal health services during pregnancy, delivery and in the postpartum period are required to ensure a mother's health and that of their infants.

Many maternal deaths occur at the first referral level; either because women come from too far and arrive too late or because the essential obstetric care they urgently need is not available (WHO 1991).

The referral system is challenged with poor transport and communication networks. Most of the roads in the rural areas are poor while the communication system that has been established for referrals does not function efficiently.

In cases where radio communication equipment have been installed and ambulances provided, their operation and maintenance has been a great challenge to the districts. As a result, relatives of the sick women are often asked to fuel the ambulances, yet most of them are too poor to afford the cost.

Based upon that background this study set out to explore the availability of transport for maternal health services and perceptions about the proposed transportation project for pregnant women.

This information will be used to inform an innovation that aims at increasing access to institutional deliveries by influencing supply and demand side factors such as transport, and the financial cost of seeking care. This intervention will be conducted by the Future Health Systems Study Group.



TOUGH: A pregnant women is taken to a clinic on a bicycle ambulance in the remote area of Karamoja.

Objectives

- ♣ Explore the availability of transport for maternal health services (ANC and deliveries).
- ♣ To establish the attitudes of the transport providers towards the transportation project for pregnant women.
- ♣ To obtain suggestions about preferred modes and frequency of payment of the transport providers.
- ♣ To identify the challenges and solutions that transporters fore see in the transportation project.

Where was the

The study was done in Tororo, Pallisa, Soroti and Kamuli districts and it was qualitative in nature.

In depth interviews and focus group discussions were held with bicycle riders, motorcycle riders, taxi drivers and leaders of the transport organizations.



A nurse checking on a pregnant woman.

Results

It was reported that most mothers who seek ANC and delivery care from health facilities in these districts walked to the facilities.

Although bicycles, motor cycles and vehicles were available for their use, often they could not afford the transport charges.

The cost of transport varies according to the distance travelled, time of the journey, and type of transport.

The cost is highest for vehicles, then motor cycles and least for the bicycle, the longer the distance the higher the cost.

Also costs go up during the night especially in the late hours of the night say from 10:00pm East African Standard Time

"Most of them foot. Some have died because they cannot go to the hospital for treatment because the distance between their homes and the hospital is so big! Even some of them get complications of delivery while on the way footing to the health centre and end up dying. I appeal to Government to place enough health centres in the villages so that these poor mothers can conveniently deliver without having to foot longer distances to get to a particular health centre to deliver."(FGD motorcycle riders Pallisa District)

Attitudes towards transportation project to help mothers

The project to help the mothers was generally acceptable and welcome in all the four districts where the FGDs and key informant interviews were done.

Those interviewed felt that meeting transport charges for the pregnant mothers would greatly reduce the difficulties that they encounter in getting transport to the health facilities.

The transport providers also felt that this would be a more reliable source of income for them if the project were to function as planned.

Way forward

The project needs to be carefully planned to accommodate the suggestions of the stakeholders at local and national level, with the involvement of local authorities to ensure accountability and trust between the project team on one hand and the different stakeholders on the other hand.

Sensitization using various media should be undertaken to increase awareness about the project. It could also reduce social cultural barriers that influence access to maternal health services.

The Future Health Systems Research Programme Consortium

The aim of the Future Health Systems (FHS) Research Programme Consortium is to find ways to translate political and financial commitments to meet the health needs of the poor. The consortium addresses fundamental questions about the design of future health systems, and works closely with actors who are leading the transformation of health systems in their new realities.

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For more information contact: Dr George Pariyo, Makerere University School of Public Health, Mulago Hill Road P. O. Box 7072 Kampala.
Tel:+256414530291 Fax: 256-41-540633 www.musph.ac.ug