

Malawi German Health Programme

Health systems strengthening with a focus on reproductive health

Background

Since the introduction of the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) for health, Malawi has made important progress on key health parameters: from 2004–2010, the number of health staff tripled; 52% of health facilities currently offer a comprehensive essential health package free of charge, which includes essential obstetric care; the proportion of deliveries performed in health care facilities rose from 57.2% in 2004 to 89% in 2014; and the percentage of women attending at least one antenatal care visit has risen to 96%.¹ Despite this, maternal and child mortality remains unacceptably high. In 2014, an average of 574 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births and 29 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births were reported.²

The main reason for these high mortality rates is inadequate access to essential health services of satisfactory quality. The Malawi Health Sector Strategic Plan 2011–16 therefore emphasises the need to improve the quality of care and focuses in particular on maternal and neonatal health.

Objective

The aim of the Health Systems Strengthening with a Focus on Reproductive Health technical cooperation (TC) module is to ensure that the Ministry of Health (MoH), in cooperation with non-state actors, provides effective and efficient health care of appropriate quality, particularly when it comes to the health of mothers and newborns.

Approach

The programme is comprised of three overarching work areas: (1) Access to health care services of appropriate quality, (2) Human resource management and development, and

1 Malawi Demographic Health Surveys of 2004 and 2010; Malawi MDG Endline Survey 2014.
2 Malawi MDG Endline Survey 2014.

Lead deliverer	Ministry of Health, Republic of Malawi
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(3) Partnerships with non-state actors. All these work areas are directed at sustainably improving the quality of health services and have a particular focus on maternal and neonatal health.

The Ministry of Health and its peripheral administrative structures are leading the delivery of the development measures. The programme is working closely with non-state actors and parastatal organisations, private providers, private commercial organisations and educational institutions, and its TC module is designed to complement the financial cooperation measure on Results-Based Financing for Maternal and Neonatal Health.

Quality management

In the first of the above-mentioned work areas, the emphasis lies on strengthening quality management (QM) systems and structures. Accordingly, at the national level, GIZ is supporting the MoH in its work to set up a quality management secretariat and, at the district level, the project is working with four secondary hospitals and 14 health centres in four target districts (Balaka, Dedza, Mchinji and Ntcheu) to strengthen their QM processes.

Measures are also being taken to strengthen Malawi's national Health Management Information System (HMIS). At the national level, this involves supporting the Central Monitoring and Evaluation Division (CMED) with its preparation of biannual national HMIS reports. At the decentralised level, the four target districts of Balaka, Dedza, Mchinji and Ntcheu are receiving targeted support to enhance data collection, entry, analysis and use for evidence-based decision-making.



left: An 'integrated expert' at the College of Medicine works closely with one of his students, an anaesthetic clinical officer.

right: Midwifery students use the skills laboratory to improve their obstetric skills.



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In partnership with the district health management teams of the four target districts, the programme works with health facilities to develop a series of thematic action plans that address specific shortcomings in quality management and HMIS. This enables partner health facilities to meet nationally agreed quality-of-care and data management standards. The plans also place a particular emphasis on the national sexual and reproductive health and infection prevention protocols. Furthermore, the TC module has assisted the development of an accreditation mechanism, which is currently being piloted in six health facilities at primary, secondary and tertiary level.

Human resources for health

For the second work area, GIZ is closely collaborating with the Ministry of Health's Reproductive Health Directorate (RHD) to establish a mentorship project for maternal and neonatal health. The project's objective is to enhance the knowledge and skills of nurses, midwives and clinicians who provide emergency obstetric and neonatal care services in the four target districts. This initiative, together with the wider, more structural support on quality management outlined above, will ensure that the quality of clinical services in maternal and neonatal health continues to improve.

GIZ also signed a financing agreement with the College of Medicine (CoM) in support of the Bachelor of Science (BSc) Programme for Specialised Clinical Officers. This initiative aims to ensure that, by 2019, each of Malawi's 28 district hospitals employs at least one specialised clinical officer in each of the six designated areas of specialised care (meaning 168 such officers are required). GIZ is covering the tuition fees of 70 students taking the BSc, which constitutes 42% of the 168 target. In addition, GIZ is assisting with the procurement of learning materials and advising CoM on developing monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

and sustainability strategies for the BSc programme. Integrated experts placed in the departments in question are supporting the coordination and implementation of this programme.

Furthermore, 10 integrated experts (CIM) have taken up positions at CoM and at two tertiary hospitals: Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre and Kamuzu Central Hospital in Lilongwe. These experts play a central role in the teaching of medical personnel and their responsibilities include the coordination and implementation of the above-mentioned BSc programme and the training of medical registrars.

Public-private partnerships

The third work area seeks to enhance the role of non-state actors in the delivery of health services and the development of the health system. Firstly, this is achieved by supporting the MoH with its development of guidelines and strategies for contracting out health services to private sector parties. Secondly, GIZ works together with non-health private sector companies to establish specific PPPs. One such partnership has been established with Illovo Sugar Malawi Ltd. This partnership enables public and private actors to work closely together on improving the provision of health care services, health education and access to safe drinking water in Chikwawa district, one of the company's main production sites in Malawi.

In collaboration with the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship, GIZ is providing further support for the establishment of dialogue platforms between the public and private sectors, with the aim of improving the access of workers and their communities to quality health and social services.

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