

Connect | Inspire | Challenge | Learn | Act

Dear MDSR Action Network members,

Welcome to the first MDSR Action Network newsletter of the year! We hope you had a great festive season, and wish you a very happy and inspiring new year!

We also want to welcome once again our newest members! We are thrilled to see that we keep growing, and wish to encourage you to tell colleagues and others about our Network.

Did you notice that we finally have a name? An overwhelming majority of those of you who responded to our survey in October 2013 voted to include MDSR in our name. So we listened... we are now officially called the MDSR Action Network!

In this short newsletter we share with you:

- 📍 the MDSR training package recently launched in Ethiopia
- 📍 exciting news on MDR from Nigeria
- 📍 key findings from the membership survey we conducted last October

Happy reading!

Learn | Resources | New guidance | MDSR training package, Ethiopia

Over the past year, Ethiopia has made some great strides towards the implementation of MDSR, which we are delighted to share with you today.

The MDSR system was officially launched in Ethiopia in May 2013. Since then, technical guidelines were issued to guide MDSR implementation and a training package was developed to roll out MDSR across the country.

A national level Train-the-Trainers workshop was conducted by a multi-sectoral team drawn from the Task Force membership, the Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (ESOG), and the E4A technical assistance team. Following the national training workshop, a “training cascade” was introduced. Each Regional Health Bureau is responsible for rolling-out the MDSR training to relevant participants in their regions.

The training materials are designed to support delivery of a practical introduction to the Ethiopian MDSR system in order to support establishment of a functional, effective and action-oriented MDSR system across Ethiopia. Specific aims include:

- 📍 Introducing MDSR concepts and rationale, with presentation of international evidence for its effectiveness and best practice
- 📍 Providing a detailed overview of the Ethiopia MDSR model and vision for how it will operate at each level of the national health system
- 📍 Ensuring staff are equipped with the requisite knowledge and competence-based skills for each component of the MDSR process
- 📍 Providing an opportunity for participants to become familiar with the use of the National Guidelines and tools for data collection and reporting

By the end of each training workshop, participants should:

- 📍 Understand how MDSR can reduce maternal mortality
- 📍 Know the structure of the Ethiopian MDSR, including roles and responsibilities
- 📍 Recognise and know how to use the national Tools



- 🕒 Demonstrate ability to recommend appropriate actions
- 🕒 Appreciate the importance of MDSR processes, particularly the need for smooth bi-directional flow of information between different levels of the system
- 🕒 Understand the role of monitoring actions to ensure the “response cycle” is completed

The manual is useful for a number of people working in the field of health in other countries, including national and sub-national health programme managers, facility level managers, service providers at the community and facility level, professional associations as well as teaching institutions that train health professionals etc.

The Ethiopian National MDSR Training Package was developed by the Federal Ministry of Health MDSR Task Force, with technical support from Evidence for Action. It is currently being implemented by the Federal Ministry of Health with support from Evidence for Action through the University of Aberdeen and WHO.

- 🕒 To download the Ethiopia MDSR Technical Guidelines, click [here](#)
- 🕒 To download the training package supporting their implementation, click [here](#)

Act | Updates from around the world

In Nigeria, national maternal death reviews (MDR) guidelines were recently adopted and MDR has been gaining momentum on the ground. Well done to the Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) and partners for contributing towards this thanks to their ongoing advocacy efforts!

Key strategies leading to the institutionalisation of MDR in Nigeria included:

- 🕒 Actively advocating for MDR to state and federal government as well as health authorities
- 🕒 Organising talks and workshops to raise awareness of and gather broader support for MDR
- 🕒 Actively supporting the development of the guidelines themselves through a technical workshop involving key stakeholders
- 🕒 Working relentlessly to have the guidelines endorsed and approved by the National Council of Health
- 🕒 Supporting the capacity-building of health workers on the ground with of view of starting implementation
- 🕒 Taking active steps towards the phased introduction of MDR on the ground. For example, SOGON partnered with the Lagos State Government on conducting maternal death reviews at the facility level across the state



Key challenges in the process related to the length of the bureaucratic process leading to guidelines approval, as well as the availability of government budgeted funding. Regarding the latter, catalytic donor funding (FIGO LOGIC, MacArthur Foundation) was sought to cover initial activities including advocacy, the development and printing of guidelines and tools, and the training of health workers.

It is expected that MDR in Nigeria will initially be facility-based, with community-based reviews to be subsequently introduced. Reviews will moreover focus on maternal deaths only.

MDR are now being seen as a crucial component of strategies to reduce maternal deaths in the country.

To read more on this story, click on the links below:

- 🕒 [2015 WHO Standard: Gynaecologists Challenge FG on Maternal Death Reduction](#)
- 🕒 [SOGON partners Lagos on the review of maternal deaths](#)

Learn | Resources | Journal articles

A recent [systematic review](#) searched for studies published between 1988 and January 2013 that reported on provincial maternal mortality in China. Although the country had provincial maternal mortality surveillance systems which are reported to cover a much larger population than national maternal and child mortality surveillance (NMCMS) system, little was known about them outside of China.

The review found there were regional disparities in maternal mortality surveillance systems within China. Although maternal deaths were registered in nearly all provinces in coast regions, stratified random sampling surveillance had been adopted in remote areas. The MMR across the country declined between 1996 and 2009.

Learn | Resources | Useful websites

In this [short video](#), Dr Matthews Mathai from the World Health Organization puts the stress on the many factors behind maternal deaths including delays in recognising that there is a problem, delays in deciding to seek care, and delays in receiving appropriate care. Maternal Death Surveillance and Response is promoted as a key strategy providing vital evidence on each death and exploring what could have been done to avoid or prevent the death, in order to save more lives in the future.

Connect and Discuss

Earlier this year we shared a brief questionnaire to find out the type of support and resources you would need from this network. Thanks to all of you who responded! This is what you told us:

- 🗣️ The majority of responses came from members based in sub-Saharan Africa and/or reported having a professional interest in the region
- 🗣️ There was a strong interest for all suggested areas of activities of the MDSR Action Network, from improving access to key reports and publications to facilitating discussions through a forum
- 🗣️ Many members reported having received training in one or more areas of MDSR, with the majority reporting having been trained on piloting and implementing MDSR
- 🗣️ Many felt that the Network should be providing support in developing partnerships with like-minded professionals, as well as providing training materials and facilitating exchange visits
- 🗣️ And finally, most of you would prefer to receive their newsletter as a PDF document

We are now more aware of your needs and are taking on board your suggestions, as we develop this network further. In the meantime, if you have other ideas, comments or recommendations, please feel free to get in touch with us by email!

And finally...

Please make sure you have added us to your contact list and do let us know if you change your email address, so that you do receive updates directly to your inbox!

And as ever... do share this newsletter with your colleagues and others who may wish to join this Network. Send in your news and views too – we will be delighted to feature interesting news from all over the world.

We look forward to a year full of inspiring discussions and actions to save mothers' lives!

Louise

l.hulton@evidence4action.net