



NIHR Global Health Research Group on Stillbirth Prevention and Management in Sub-Saharan Africa

Newsletter

September 2019 – Issue 6

The NIHR Global Health Research Group on Stillbirth Prevention and Management in Sub-Saharan Africa at The University of Manchester is a three-year programme funded by the National Institute of Health Research (UK) implemented by The University of Manchester in partnership with LAMRN (www.lamrn.org), a network of six African countries (Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

The programme aims to promote knowledge sharing and capacity building in the area of stillbirth prevention and management in low resource setting. Through this work the research group will gain an understanding of the issues in improving stillbirth prevention, childbirth and bereavement care in low income settings; develop culturally relevant studies for further investigation in this unexplored area and establish itself in the Global arena as a catalyst for change.

The NIHR Stillbirth project launched the new website

Hosted at The University of Manchester, **the new website** presents the different research activities carried out in the six LAMRN countries and our approach to explore a sensitive area such as stillbirth.

The website includes also a **blog** to give voice to all our members. This includes updates about in-country research activities, stories from our colleagues who explain how the programme has enhanced their research skills as well as helping plan their career. We also expect contributions from members of the Community Engagement and Involvement groups to share how taking part in this programme has enriched them and provided an opportunity to participate in research.

The website is available here: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/stillbirth-prevention-africa/> .

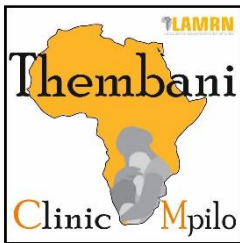


Please follow us on Twitter [@LamrnStillbirth](https://twitter.com/LamrnStillbirth) for the most recent updates.

COUNTRY UPDATES

Zimbabwe: Launch of the feasibility study

Zimbabwe successfully launched a feasibility study on 2nd September 2019. Guided by the country lead, Mrs Kushupika Dube, recruitment of participants and interviews have been carried out until present. Positive outcomes resulted from several stakeholders meetings held in August by the project team (Dr Christina M Rawdon, Mrs Kushupika Dube, Mrs Grace Danda and Mrs Sikhululekile Mremi) and the UK counterpart. A strong buy-in from Mpilo Hospital culminated in



the nomination of a team of dedicated midwives and obstetricians to operate a proposed specialist antenatal clinical service, which has been named **Thembani (with hope)**. This special clinic will care for women in a subsequent pregnancy following stillbirth.



From left: Skue Jele, Kushy Dube, Akim Familusi, Grace Danda, Dr Rebecca Smyth, Dr Solwayo Ngwenya (seated)

Zambia: Ethical approvals received

LAMRN Zambia received ethical approval to conduct a new research study focusing on communication following stillbirth, in Mansa (Luapala Province). This research built on ongoing exploratory research in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania. It aims to understand how stillbirth is communicated by health professionals to bereaved parents. It will also explore parents and healthcare providers' acceptability and perception around the use of non-invasive post-mortem procedures to better understand the cause of stillbirth. The Zambia lead, Mrs Chowa Kasengele and the Research Assistants Kutemba Lyangenda and Khuzuet Tuwele are now preparing to start recruitment.

The Medical Superintendent and the management team of Mansa General Hospital appreciated that research on stillbirth will continue and can provide evidence-based practice to help mitigate this poor pregnancy outcome.



From left: LAMRN lead, Mrs Kasengele, the Medical superintendent, and the research assistants with the staff supporting the new study.

Tanzania: Dissemination and capacity building

Tanzania has disseminated the results of the mix-methods study exploring delays in effective intrapartum care.

August was marked with the attendance to the Conference organised by the East, Central and Southern Africa College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, in Dar es Salaam. Presentations of the research findings were shared with the audience who suggested wider dissemination across the region.



Dr Rose Laisser presenting at the ECSACOG Conference in Dar es Salaam



Capacity building of early career researchers has also been promoted: Deborah Kimaro and Happyness Shayo attended a workshop in Moshi, organised by the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

At this event they presented study findings, networked with peer researchers and received one to one mentoring sessions for their professional development.

Happyness Shayo (left) and Deborah Kimaro (right) with a delegate in Moshi, Tanzania

Malawi: Completing the re-audit

Malawi team has been evaluating the interventions of the Audit action plan. This included a 48-hours data collection of all births at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH), Blantyre and Bwaila Maternity Unit (BMU), Lilongwe.

We aimed to capture the implementation of the main agreed actions, which included regular monitoring of blood pressure during labour, checking the fetal heart rate before a Caesarean section is performed and monitoring women with high blood pressure.

To compare with the initial audit results, data collection involved the review of antenatal clinic records and of every case of stillbirth occurring between August and October 2019. Mentoring of hospital staff by the LAMRN team (Chisomo Petross and Isabella Chisuse) is still ongoing to sustain change of clinical practice.



On the right in green, RA Isabella Chisuse on night duty with midwives at QECH - 48hr data collection

Uganda: Start-up meeting for the feasibility study

The Uganda team conducted meetings with their Community Engagement and Involvement (CEI) group and with the staff of Kawempe National Referral Hospital to share findings of their qualitative study. The CEI members learnt about health workers' experiences of caring for parents after a stillbirth, while the health workers express their training needs to provide better support to parents who had a stillbirth. This informed the development of a feasibility study.

In this regard, members of the Ugandan team and of the UK team (Prof Dame Tina Lavender and Dr Tracey Mills) held a start-up meeting with the staff of the proposed study site, Naguru hospital, to gain consensus and institutional buy-in for the implementation of the new study.



Members of the CEI participating to the dissemination meeting, August 2019

Kenya: Participation in Universal Health Coverage

As Kenya strives to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), strengthening quality of care is integral to sustainably achieving health targets.

A Perinatal health quality care symposium was held in Nairobi in July 2019. The symposium focused on improving perinatal health outcomes within the context of UHC in Kenya. This brought together leading researchers, technical experts, policy makers, academia, health providers and civil society leaders. They included the Head of Reproductive and maternal Health Services Unit Dr. Joel Gondi, the Director General of Health Ministry of Health Dr. Wekesa Masabi, Dr. Joyce Luvusa WHO, Dr. Khadija Abdalla UNICEF, Angela Nguku from White Ribbon Alliance and members of *Still a Mum* an organization comprising of women who have had stillbirth and have come together to support each other. The Kenyan team was invited to present preliminary findings of the NIHR Stillbirth study. Prof Grace Omoni (LAMRN lead for Kenya) welcomed feedback from the audience, suggesting that guidelines should be developed to take care of parents and families with stillbirth.



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