



Community of Practice
Financial Access to Health Services

**Exemption policies for maternal health services in Africa:
evaluations, experiences and knowledge-sharing**

Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), 25th to 28th November 2013

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Please, submit your abstract before **30th June 2013** on the <http://ouagadougou2013.sciencesconf.org/> platform.

Important: It is recommended **to create an account** on this site in order to submit your abstract. Please do not leave this to the last minute, as it takes 2-3 days to create an account. **Later submissions are discouraged**



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Aim

The Community of Practice "Financial Access to Health Services" from the "Harmonization for Health in Africa" (HHA) platform, in collaboration with the FEMHealth research consortium and universities of Montréal (Canada) and Heidelberg (Germany), are organizing a workshop on **"exemption policies for maternal health services in Africa: evaluation, experience and knowledge sharing."** The workshop will be held in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) from the 25th to 28th November 2013, including workshops and a field trip (optional).

This workshop is also being held in the context of the closure of FEMHealth's research project. In this context, a portion of the conference will be devoted to the presentation of the results stemming from this research.

Objectives

To accelerate progress towards the MDGs, many African countries have introduced exemption policies for certain health services (HIV, malaria, childbirth, caesarean, etc ...) or for specific population groups (children under five, pregnant women, the elderly, etc ...) since the 2000s. If the process of implementation of these policies has been relatively well documented by researchers, many questions remain on the effects of these policies, including on health systems. For researchers the answers to these questions are not easy, especially since these exemption policies have often been introduced on a national scale and rapidly.

The main objective of the Ouagadougou workshop will be to make an assessment of the scientific work in this area, with particular attention to empirical results, methodological approaches and to evidence on the interventions themselves. The workshop will build on the Community of Practice's willingness to establish an innovative dialogue between researchers and stakeholders of these policies (policy makers, health care providers, civil society, parliamentarians, etc.). The workshop will be an opportunity to draw potentially useful lessons for the evaluation and monitoring of future health policies, particularly in the field of health care financing and maternal health.

For more information on the conference, please see the concept note of the workshop available on the conference website: <http://ouagadougou2013.sciencesconf.org/> or on the FEMHealth website: www.abdn.ac.uk/femhealth.

The call for abstracts

To promote knowledge sharing of a larger number of experiences on the exemption of maternal health policies in Africa, the organizing committee is issuing a call for papers to researchers, policy makers and operational staff. African experts are particularly encouraged to bid.

Proposals should focus on the main theme of the conference, namely exemption policies for interventions that address maternal health services. They may also address one or more of the following themes:

1. The formulation of maternal health exemption policies

One of the main characteristics of the maternal health exemption policies in Africa is that they have often been decided without always taking time to reflect and discuss with all stakeholders. We are looking for experiences in the decision-making process of these exemption policies (how and why they were developed, their initial objectives and their relationship with other exemption policies which were already implemented in the country).

2. Utilisation of maternal health services

The first objective of maternal health exemption policies is to increase the use of skilled deliveries and contribute to the coverage of the major obstetric emergencies. We are looking for studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of the policies in this regard.

3. Protection against catastrophic expenditures

Some exemption policies have often targeted health services which are very costly for households, such as caesarean sections. We invite studies which indicate the extent to which these policies have been effective in protecting households against catastrophic expenditures and impoverishment.

4. Local health systems

The exemption policies are likely to have multiple systemic effects. We invite studies showing the impact of the exemption policies on the functioning of the health system. For example studies analyzing the effects of exemption policies on the incentives of healthcare providers, their workload, the doctor-patient relationship, the financial sustainability of health facilities, etc. Submissions should clearly identify the factors that have helped or hindered the strengthening of the local health system.

5. Quality of care

A criticism often raised against exemption policies - especially when they are under-funded - is the negative impact they may have on quality of care. We are looking for studies that have established a relationship between the implementation of exemption policies and the quality of care provided to users.

6. The impact on equity

The majority of studies report an increase in the utilisation of the free services as a consequence of the exemption policies, but few focus on equitable access among the populations. We are looking for experiences that compare access to care among the poor / rich, urban / rural, near / distant populations following the introduction of free policies. Studies documenting the distribution of health or economic benefits (impact assessment of benefits) are also welcome.

7. Cost and financing

Exemption policies require the state to replace the user in financing the costs which they are now exempt. As third-party payers, the State may opt for different types of contracts to compensate health facilities. We are looking for methodological or empirical presentations on the cost of exemption policies and on the issues of financing these costs in general. Studies on cost-effectiveness/ efficiency of these interventions are also accepted.

8. Methodological innovations

The multiple effects of exemption policies pose methodological challenges. We are seeking papers with research methodological innovations applied to exemption policies, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed.

9. Experiences of monitoring, evaluation and remedial measures or reforms

Various studies have shown that exemption policies were often formulated or implemented in haste. We are looking for interventions from operational actors (coordination committee, NGOs, technical or financial partners ...) reporting on (1) how, through monitoring and evaluation systems, they identified potential weaknesses in the design or implementation of these policies, (2) the measures taken to attempt to correct any initial weaknesses.

10. Dialogue between researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders

One of the objectives of the workshop is to promote the dialogue between different knowledge holders. Presentations on knowledge management and knowledge transfer strategies which are likely to contribute to better formulation or implementation of financing policies are welcome. We would be particularly interested in evidence from (1)

political entrepreneurs (NGO, project ...) on their experiences in disseminating lessons learnt from their pilots, (2) networking facilitators on contacting different knowledge holders, and (3) policy makers on their application (or not) of the evidence produced by the other stakeholders (and why it was used or not).

The submission and selection process

A scientific committee will evaluate the proposals received. Only oral presentations or posters relevant and related to the theme of the workshop will be retained. Abstracts may be submitted in either English or French.

Applicants are requested to submit short abstracts (not exceeding 500 words), but sufficiently clear and precise to enable the Scientific Committee to assess the relevance of the submission.

The general structure of the submission by type of study is as follows:

| Research presentations (questions 1 to 7) | Experiences of implementers and communicators (questions 9 and 10) | Methodological approaches (question 8) |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Title - Introduction & background - Aim of study - Methods - Results - Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial Policy - Problems identified - Measures taken - Results - Lessons learnt <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title - Problem - Intervention or process - Results - Lessons learnt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title - The problem - Methodological proposal - Illustration/example - Discussion |

Panel submissions are also accepted. All communications relating to the panel shall be submitted in the format shown above. An organizer or chair of the proposed panel should also be identified.

At this stage, we cannot guarantee that the acceptance of an abstract grants the participant full coverage of the participation costs. The organizing committee strongly encourages applicants to explore their own source of funding.

Main deadlines

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|---------------------|---|
| 15th May 2013 | Start of submission of proposals for papers |
| 30th June 2013 | Deadline for submission of proposals for papers |
| 15th August 2013 | Notification to authors of accepted papers |
| 30th September 2013 | Preliminary timetable for the conference shared |

Contacts for the Organizing Committee

For further information about the conference and / or submission of papers/abstracts, please contact the organizing committee of the conference by sending an email to: cdp.afss@gmail.com

Information about the Conference

The conference registration website is: <http://ouagadougou2013.sciencesconf.org/>

All the information about of the conference will be shared on this website.

The official blog for discussions on the contents will be: <http://www.healthfinancingafrica.org/>. Please note that the Health Financing in Africa blog is already interested in receiving contributions of a maximum of 1000 words relating to the themes of the conference (see application form).

Experts and researchers interested in the conference are recommended to join the online discussion group Community of Practice Financial Access to Health Services (https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/cop-financial_access_health_services).