



Introduction to FEMHealth panel: fee exemptions for obstetric care in West Africa and Morocco – new knowledge, new tools

Dr Sophie Witter, scientific
coordinator





Partners

1. University of Aberdeen (Immpact), UK (coordinator)
2. Agence de Formation, de Recherche et d'Expertise en Santé pour l'Afrique (AFRIC Santé), Burkina Faso
3. Centre de Recherche en Reproduction Humaine et en Démographie (CERRHUD), Benin
4. Ecole National de Santé Publique, Morocco
5. Institute of Tropical Medicine, Belgium
6. Institut de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé (IRSS), Burkina Faso
7. London School of Tropical Medicine, UK
8. MARIKANI, Mali

Funded by EC under grant agreement no 261449, 2011-14

For further details, please see: www.abdn.ac.uk/femhealth



Original rationale for research

- High regional maternal mortality and morbidity
- Awareness of the role of financial barriers
- Large number of government initiatives in recent years to reduce these through fee exemptions & subsidies, particularly in West Africa region
- Donor interest related in part to the MDGs
- Ongoing studies but limited scope
- Some degree of francophone isolation? Limited linkages internationally and across region?



Programme objectives

Improving the health of mothers and newborn through:

1. Improved methodologies for complex evaluations
2. Better evidence on fee exemption, its implementation and impact
3. Innovations in communicating evidence, with a focus on regional networks



Methodology – the objectives

- Tools for assessing policy transfer (international, regional, national, district)
- Tools for assessing implementation of health financing policies
- Development of realist case study approach
- Tool for mapping policy effects on local health systems (POEM)
- Using near miss to assess impact on quality of care and health outcomes



Evidence – some of the questions

- **How cost-effective are the exemption policies?**
- What are the drivers behind their introduction?
- What common implementation challenges do they face?
- How do they affect, and how are they affected by the local health system?
- What is their impact on the quality of care on offer to women?
- **Do they reach those in most need?**
- How do they affect other (non-financial) barriers?
- What health gains can be attributed to them?
- How could their overall effectiveness be strengthened?
- **Are they sustainable within these kinds of contexts?**



Communicating research - objectives

- Pilot a 'community of practice' approach to disseminating learning (creating a network of researchers, policy-makers, technical staff and development partners), linked by theme and region
- Document its dynamics and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses
- If successful, establish a functioning network which survives beyond the project lifespan



Methods

Development of conceptual framework

Purposive selection of 6-8 sites per country

14 main research tools:

1. Health policy – interviews with key national and international actors, document review and observation of meetings
2. **Health financing – financial flows tracking, HW survey, exit interviews, costing of services**
3. Local health system – Policy Effects Mapping (interviews, observation and data analysis) and realist evaluation
4. **Quality of care – medical records review (near miss, omissions score)**
5. **Utilisation – secondary data analysis**
6. Anthropological component – interviews and observation in facilities (patients and staff)



Some general limitations

- Limited baseline data in all countries
- No 'controls' – national policies introduced simultaneously and in all areas
- Gaps in routine data, especially for some aspects of financing

Addressed through:

- Use of time series data, where available
- Horizontal analyses, e.g. between implementation and quality of care
- Triangulation of multiple sources