



Strengthening Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response Through Low-Cost Accountability Frameworks: Lessons from Kasese District, Uganda

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Background: Uganda records approximately 25,473 perinatal deaths annually. While the Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) system requires timely death notification and auditing to drive quality improvement, national 7-day audit compliance stood at 60.8% in 2023. Kasese District—a highburden region averaging 498 annual perinatal deaths—significantly underperformed, achieving only 65% notification within 24 hours and 25% audit completion within 7 days. To address this gap, Kasese District, in collaboration with Enabel, implemented a structured accountability framework.

Methods: This implementation science case study utilized routine DHIS2 data from 36 maternal and newborn care facilities. The intervention comprised five core components: cocreating MPDSR bottleneck assessments; structured capacity building and mentorship for district committees; deploying a purpose-built weekly data-tracking tool managed by the district biostatistician; establishing a WhatsApp platform for real-time information sharing; and institutionalizing weekly virtual review meetings to track audit recommendations.

Results: Within two years, the framework yielded substantial improvements. Timely perinatal death notification within 24 hours increased from 65% (2023) to 78% (2024), reaching 93% by 2025. Concurrently, 7-day audit completion rates rose from 25% (2023) to 65% (2024), and ultimately to 77% by 2025, exceeding the 50% national target by 27 percentage points.

Conclusion: Implementing low-cost, structured accountability mechanisms—grounded in data tracking, continuous communication, and leadership engagement—can significantly optimize district-level MPDSR performance. This framework offers a scalable, affordable model for sub-Saharan health systems striving to strengthen surveillance systems and reduce preventable perinatal mortality through data driven action.

