



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

## Newsletter

March 2021 – Issue 10

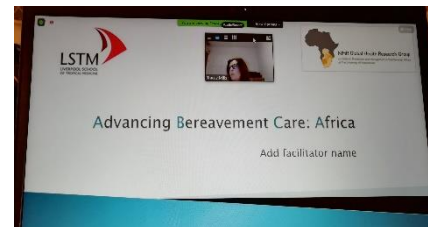
**The NIHR Global Health Research Group on Stillbirth Prevention and Management in Sub-Saharan Africa** is a programme funded by the National Institute of Health Research (UK) implemented by the Centre for Childbirth, Women's and Newborn Health at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in partnership with LAMRN ([www.lamrn.org](http://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.

### Progressing with research studies and dissemination

In the first quarter of 2021 we have continued the studies commenced as part of an 11-month extension to the programme.

In January, Dr Carol Bedwell and Dr Tracey Mills conducted a virtual train the trainer (TOT) on "Advancing Bereavement Care in Africa" with local facilitators and CEI leads from Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The 2-day workshop included both an introduction to training methodologies as well as the content of the package. Developed with input from CEI groups, the training package promotes awareness, understanding, and knowledge of person-centred, respectful, and sensitive care for women and families whose baby has died before, during, or shortly after birth. TOT was followed by in-country training of health professionals and students' midwives.



Virtual TOT delivered by Dr Bedwell and Dr Mills

Given the successful experience of Community Engagement and Involvement in Africa, the NIHR has invited our Group to various workshops to share our experiences. In addition, Dr Carol Bedwell has secured a small fund, awarded by LSTM, to develop training materials on CEI in LMICs.

The Group has continued to disseminate findings of research studies at national and international conferences and through [publications](#). In January the Regional Coordinator, Dr Sabina Wakasiaka attended the Conference of the Kenyan Association of Obstetrics and Gynaecology to share findings of the LAMRN network. In March, the UK team attended the Preterm Birth Dialogues, organised by the NIHR Group on Preterm Birth Prevention and Management at the University of Sheffield. An oral presentation, delivered by Valentina Actis Danna, was awarded among the top 4 presentations. The Group has also submitted abstracts, which have been accepted, to upcoming conferences including the World Congress of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; and Building Children's Nursing for Africa Conference in South Africa.

During this quarter, Dr Paschal Mdoe completed a post-doctorate fellowship programme with the Group and agreed to continue the collaboration for further research in respectful care.

In March **Dr Rebecca Smyth** left the Group for retirement. Although we are sad to lose such a valuable member of the team, we wish her the best in this new chapter of life.



For the most recent updates please visit our programme [website](#) and follow us on twitter [@Lamrnstillbirth](#)

## COUNTRY UPDATES

### Zimbabwe: Advancing Bereavement Care training successfully completed

In January, Kushupika Dube, Grace Danda and 4 facilitators (2 matrons, a sister in charge and the CEI lead) attended the virtual Train the Trainer on Advancing Bereavement Care in Africa, to be rolled out with health professionals and students. To comply with COVID measures requiring social distancing, Mpilo hospital authorities allowed for workshops with a maximum of 15 participants. Thus, 39 health professionals were trained across 5 workshops. Participants included staff from the Mpilo Maternity Unit, members of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the Chairperson of the National University of Science and Technology Department of Nursing and Midwifery and students undertaking a Master in Midwifery. Research Assistant, Dr Grace Danda completed data collection before and after the training. A further assessment will be done in three-months' time to evaluate impact in clinical practice.



Group photo of health professionals who attended the workshop



Mpilo Principal Nursing Officer receiving his certificate of attendance

### Uganda: completion of the feasibility study

LAMRN Uganda completed data collection for the second phase of the feasibility study to test an intervention (telephone peer support, and care champions) to improve bereavement care and support following stillbirth.

The team was also involved in the implementation of the Advancing Bereavement Care package. The Train the Trainers, delivered by the UK team, involved a peer supporter, a midwifery lecturer from Makerere University, a care champion and the LAMRN country leads. This was followed by face-to-face trainings of 30 healthcare professionals and 32 students' midwives. Research assistant Allen Nabisere collected demographic information and pre and post training questionnaires from all participants.



Group photo of students who attended the workshop in January 2021



Following the successful application of a GCRF grant, the UK and Uganda teams have contracted Nabwiso Film, a media company from Uganda, to develop an educational video. Titled "The Heartbeat", the video aims to train health professionals on communication and care following stillbirth in Africa. The video is in the final stage of production and will be officially distributed in the coming months.

## Tanzania: completion of Discrete Choice Experiment and start dissemination

LAMRN Tanzania completed recruitment of 250 women for the Discrete Choice Experiment study in both Mwanza and Manyara. Data were cleaned and validated and are now ready for analysis.

As part of the NIHR Group dissemination strategy, Tanzania held a stakeholder meeting in Mwanza in March, to present the results of different studies, including understanding intrapartum transfer, communication following stillbirth and the piloting of the WHO Labour Care Guide. Participants acknowledged the alarming number of stillbirths in Mwanza, and recognised the silence and stigma affecting these women. They pledged to join hands with LAMRN to advocate for open discussion on stillbirth in the community.



Dr Laisser presenting results of the NIHR Programme



Happyness Shayo explain results of the study on communication following stillbirth

## Zambia: completing the ABC workshop

LAMRN Zambia completed the Advancing Bereavement Care workshop with 32 participants including registered midwives, a radiographer, a doctor, and lecturers from the College of Midwives.

Kutemba Lyangenda and Khuzuet Tuwele collected data before and after the workshop to assess knowledge and understanding of the content.

The training enables participants to appreciate the importance of using sensitive language and treatment of stillborn babies and their families with dignity and respect, as presented in these key quotes from participants.



*"I think we were just following blindly the wrong things ... placing stillborn baby in the sluice room where the family members would collect them from for burial. It means even us health care providers contribute to the insensitive things we do to our mothers. In short, we regard the stillborn baby as 'dirty'. From now onwards, we will find a good place where to put them before collection and accord dignity towards that body."*

*"We will start making homemade cards as mementoes, giving women their antenatal cards, scan films, hold their babies and allow time to be with the baby if it is culturally acceptable to them and get photos".*

## Malawi: progressing with analysis and training providers on Bereavement care

LAMRN Malawi organised various in-country sessions of the Advancing Bereavement Care training to train students' midwives (n= 31) and healthcare workers (n= 31). A questionnaire was administered before each session to test knowledge and understanding of bereavement care and communication skills. This will be repeated after one week and in three months' time.



The team has also met with the Community Engagement and Involvement Group to involve them in the training and wider research activities.

LAMRN Malawi completed the post-test questionnaire for the Dignity Game study in December 2019. Mentored by the UK team, Isabella Chisuse is currently analysing the qualitative interviews.

## Kenya: completing data analysis and preparing for stakeholders' engagement

LAMRN Kenya completed the analysis of the interviews conducted with different groups including women with obstetric fistula (OF) and stillbirth, women waiting for reparative surgery and those who had unsuccessful OF surgery, family members, healthcare professionals, community leaders and policy makers. Several problems were identified including poor communication and provision of information around OF and stillbirth, lack of follow up post-surgery and after stillbirth, non-conducive environment for bereaved parents, loss of self-esteem and loneliness, economic hardship and poverty and misconception and beliefs around OF and stillbirth.

Following the Participatory Action Research cycle, different stakeholders were engaged in a consultation process to suggest interventions at hospital, community and policy levels, to be included in a support package. The team is now refining the intervention and will be writing a new protocol for a feasibility study.



From right: Julie Nyanchama, Sabina Wakasiaka, Sara Omache (County Executive Committee member of Health) and Jerusha Omari.



Member of the County Assembly and Local authority discussing possible interventions.