Reduce Maternal Mortality with Quality Mother’s Shelters

In Kalomo District, it is apparent that Mother’s Shelters are in desperate need of good quality structures in order to assist with the reduction of maternal mortality. On one visit to a Rural Health Center in Nameeto, I found one such structure deplorable.

Nameeto RHC

In a late afternoon when I went to the Health Center to make my mentoring visit I noticed that there were many women at the structure with no roof called a Mother’s Shelter. I continued to assess the overall Health Center’s need while communicating with the Enrolled Nurse (EN). He expressed to me the number of deliveries had increased. In April, they had 28 deliveries, May 23 deliveries and in June there were 33 deliveries. There were 13 Mother’s at the Mother’s Shelter awaiting delivery, with nowhere to sleep. I was told by the Enrolled Nurse that the Mother’s were sleeping cramped into the Female ward, which only has three beds.

There are many things in need at the Health Center; restrooms which are non-existent presently (however, toilets are under construction), there is no running water and the borehole is about 100 meters from the facility, the autoclave is not used due to lack of gas, and the refrigerator is not working therefore, no vaccines are given.

However, the mothers continue to flow into the facility even though there is only one skilled EN who delivers all the newborns. There are no Safe Motherhood Action Groups (SMAGS) in the community serving Nameeto, but there are four Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) that are very active and are
motivating mothers to deliver at the center. So it appears that many more mothers would come if there were a shelter for them to be able to wait for their delivery.

To date, the catchment population for Nameeto is 11,736; of which 2,629 or 22.42% are women between the child bearing ages of 15 to 49 years of age. It is estimated that the expected pregnancies in 2014 will be 659 up 5.4% from 634 in 2013. Expected deliveries in 2013 is 610 and live births 581. With a 5.4% estimated increase Nameeto will have 635 expected deliveries and 604 live births in 2014.

Nameeto had a total of 150 births from June 2012 to May 2013. Births were conducted by Skilled, Trained and Traditional Birth Attendants (20 by skilled personnel, 95 by trained personnel and 35 by TBA’s).

There are no district funds presently to build a Mother’s Shelter. However, partners have been consulted from “Merck for Mother” to assist with constructing Mother’s Shelter in the Kalomo District. “Merck for Mother” partners visited the Kalomo area in June 2013 and met with the District Health Officer (DHO). They were taken to view the Health Facilities at Kalomo District Hospital, Dimbwe, and Namwianga to get an idea for the type of Mother’s Shelter’s that are needed.

This is a community building initiative and it was noted that on a later visits to Nameeto in July that the grass was removed from inside the shelter. However, there still is so much work to be done on the infrastructure.

Hopefully, it the future a roof can be placed and the infrastructure can be repair in order to meet the needs of the growing population, delivery and birth rate and reduce maternal mortality and save newborn life with quality Mother’s Shelter’s.

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