

Advancements in Postpartum Hemorrhage Care (APPHC): Overview of Portfolio Development and Research Studies in Madagascar

Madagascar's maternal mortality ratio of 478 deaths per 100,000 live births is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, and 20–25% of those deaths are estimated to be due to postpartum hemorrhage (PPH).¹ Women in Madagascar face a lack of access to quality maternity care; 83% of the population lives in rural areas, which have a high fertility rate and low rates of skilled birth attendance (44%) and facility-based delivery (39%),² and where an insufficient maternal health workforce is poorly distributed.

In response to these challenges and as part of ongoing efforts to accelerate reductions in maternal deaths, Advancements in Postpartum Hemorrhage Care (APPHC) is a catalytic investment by USAID in Malawi and Madagascar for accelerating reductions in maternal deaths. This program brief presents APPHC's portfolio of research activities in Madagascar.

The APPHC Partnership is led by the Breakthrough RESEARCH and Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) projects. The HEARD and Breakthrough RESEARCH projects are both designed to provide significant global implementation research and social and behavior change (SBC) research expertise and experience for reliable evidence and strengthened institutional capacities in these fields. A description of the APPHC Partnership Approach is available, and a similar brief describes APPHC's Malawi portfolio.

APPHC Priority Development

The partnership's priority development process was iterative and consultative, revealing demand among local stakeholders for research findings that inform action, with a responsive research portfolio.

A range of determinants and vast number of actions could be studied for practical improvement of PPH prevention and treatment in Madagascar. APPHC first considered two constraints: time and resources, then looked for opportunities to inform positive change by generating actionable, timely, and relevant evidence.

From its beginning, APPHC benefitted from a complementary project: ACCESS, a major health systems bilateral project funded by U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and led by Management Sciences for Health since 2018, which was implemented to accelerate sustainable health impacts for the Malagasy people, measured by sustained reductions in maternal and child mortality and morbidity. ACCESS's specific objectives are:

- Quality health services are sustainably available and accessible;
- Health systems function effectively to support quality health service delivery; and
- Sustainable adoption of healthy behaviors and social norms by the Malagasy people.

This complementary, large implementation investment, and its collaborations with the Ministry of Health and other important decision-makers, provided an extraordinary opportunity for APPHC: to not only respond to PPH needs and opportunities presented by stakeholders and decision-makers in Madagascar, but to inform Ministry of Health and ACCESS strategies and activities as well, in addition to future USAID investments.



USAID'S HEALTH EVALUATION AND APPLIED
RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (HEARD) PROJECT



Research domains identified during national prioritization

APPHC began with a desk review, stakeholder consultations, and workshops that resulted in important implementation science themes and research domains (see table).

APPHC Portfolio of Activities

The HEARD and Breakthrough RESEARCH projects are designed to bring deep global implementation research and SBC research expertise and experience that produce high quality evidence and strengthen institutional capacities in these fields. APPHC’s portfolio of activities, co-led by HEARD, Breakthrough RESEARCH, and Madagascar-based partners^a, comprises two activity groups: implementation research studies and real-time evidence and data use including dissemination. A number of institutions in Madagascar contributed to the design^b of these research activities, with APPHC Partnership’s bolstering of research efforts by prompting technical and ethical reviews of research protocols by global

^aTandem S.A.R.L., MSH/ACCESS, DSfa (Ministère de la Santé Publique, Direction de la Santé Familiale, Service de la Maternité Sans Risque), INSPC, Société Consultus

^bINSPC, Tandem S.A.R.L., ideas42, JSI/Mahefa Miaraka, MSH/ACCESS, COMEGO, ONSFM, DSfa (Ministère de la Santé Publique, Direction de la Santé Familiale, Service de la Maternité Sans Risque) and SARGEC/DEPSI.

and local institutional review boards along with subject matter experts. APPHC’s activities build on previous investments and knowledge, with a multi-dimensional approach for both generating and testing solutions to advance the implementation of successful strategies.

APPHC Madagascar portfolio

Implementation research activities

- *Assessing Provider Perspectives and Bottlenecks Related to Managing Obstetric Complications^c*: This qualitative research study, from the scoping period, examined key barriers to health providers’ abilities to ensure effective detection and management of obstetric complications, specifically PPH.
- *Provider Support Implementation Research Study^d*: This mixed methods study aims to improve PPH management by introducing and testing a supportive approach to reduce provider vulnerabilities and strengthen mentoring for providers at the primary health care level (*centres de santé de base*, or CSBs). The provider support approach includes provider support tools to ameliorate significant barriers to PPH care encountered by providers, and alleviate their stress and exhaustion by offering these tools to maximize available resources. The provider support

^cImplementing partner: ideas42

^dImplementing partner: TANDEM

KEY IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE THEMES AND RESEARCH DOMAINS SYNTHESIZED FROM APPHC START-UP PHASE

Key Implementation Science Themes	Research Domains
Key behavioral and non-behavioral determinants affecting health providers’ behaviors and practices including provider vulnerabilities	Provider motivation, expectation, ability, and opportunity
	Provider perception of quality client counseling
	Provider norms and values
	Intervention strategies to improve provider behavior
	Teamwork and communication
	Stressors and causes of burnout
Key models and approaches related to service delivery	HR management recruitment, deployment, retention and support
	Transport and referral system/community mobilization
	Emergency response models
	Mentorship/training/support
	Supply chain/commodities/equipment
	Clinical support initiatives

approach includes a mentorship component whereby mentors use simulations and a clinical support tool with CSB providers at their facilities to reinforce their clinical knowledge and practice. This study is in collaboration with ACCESS at the central and regional levels, in Atsinanana and Vatovavy-Fitovinany, two regions where ACCESS is implemented.

Real-time evidence and data use and dissemination

In addition to implementation research, other APPCH activities are collecting, analyzing, and disseminating evidence:

- *Strategic communication and dissemination:* Through exchanges of strategic communications and knowledge management tools, APPHC is both informing, and is informed by, national, regional, and global technical networks to accelerate use of evidence to improve PPH prevention and treatment.
- *Ongoing data analysis, synthesis, and interpretation:* In coordination with ACCESS and the Ministry of Health, APPHC is supporting existing data analysis, synthesis, and interpretation to inform PPH and essential maternity service decisions, especially in conjunction with national COVID-19 guidelines.
- *Case studies^e:* This activity involves other portfolio activities by exploring opportunities for a rapid, in-depth analysis of contexts and interventions for PPH prevention

and treatment, to increase understanding of current services, supplies, provider readiness, and system resilience. Implementation is expected to occur from November 2020 through January 2021.

- *Process documentation:* The APPHC team is strategically documenting the contextual, systemic, and behavioral factors affecting its efforts and results, engaging with local collaborators to explore opportunities and record interactions and processes, particularly during COVID-19.

Influencing Change

Early and anecdotal evidence suggest that programmers and policymakers are already incorporating topics introduced by the APPHC Partnership in current discussions about maternal health programming in Madagascar. The APPHC Partnership has fostered important policy discussions, informed by multiple USAID investments. With evidence generation activities underway, the APPHC Partnership looks forward to providing recommendations for more effective programming by the Ministry of Health, current USAID projects such as ACCESS, and beyond. The APPHC Partnership continually considers new ways to incorporate other global efforts to inform the next critical iteration of implementation science and research priorities.

^eImplementing partner: Société Consultus

References

¹Institut National de la Statistique—INSTAT/Madagascar and ICF Macro. 2010. Enquête Démographique et de Santé de Madagascar 2008–2009. Antananarivo, Madagascar: INSTAT and ICF Macro.

²InStat, UNICEF, MICS6 Madagascar 2018, Snapshot: Fecondité et Planification Familiale.

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<https://www.respectfulcareresources.com/apphc>

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USAID's Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) project leverages a global partnership of more than 30 institutions to generate, synthesize, and use evidence to improve the implementation of policies and programs related to USAID priority areas, and crucial for improving health and development in low and middle-income countries.

Breakthrough RESEARCH catalyzes SBC by conducting state-of-the-art research and evaluation and promoting evidence-based solutions to improve health and development programs around the world. Breakthrough RESEARCH is a consortium led by the Population Council in partnership with Avenir Health, ideas42, Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, Population Reference Bureau, and Tulane University.