



EXPANDING BEYOND THE NUMBERS

Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Case Reviews

Inter-country Workshop for South Eastern Europe

*Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
29 September – 2 October 2014*

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Background and rationale:

In 2013, 289 000 women worldwide died during and following pregnancy and childbirth, and many more suffered pregnancy-related complications. Most of these deaths can be averted even where resources are limited but, in order to do so, the right kind of information is needed upon which to base actions.

According to the European Perinatal Report, the maternal mortality ratio in countries of the European Union is generally low. However there is good evidence that maternal deaths derived from routine statistical systems are under-reported, particularly in the countries where ratios are very low.

European countries face common challenges related to the health of mothers and babies. Despite the improvements in maternal care, pregnancy and childbirth still involve risks for pregnant women and their babies. Some risk factors associated with perinatal health, such as older age at childbirth or maternal obesity, are increasing in all countries. Questions about quality of care and the appropriate use of new health technologies are of concern everywhere. European countries face similar economic and demographic pressure, as well as similar low fertility rates and high patterns of migration of population at reproductive age, including pregnant women. In addition, the health risks are not distributed equally either across or within countries. Social factors are major determinants of perinatal care; individual family characteristics (maternal education and occupation, household income and marital status) as well as community level characteristics (deprivation, poverty, unemployment and segregation). These inequalities are associated with poor health outcomes, including maternal mortality and morbidity, and have far-reaching consequences for poor families and children.

Regular surveillance and confidential case reviews are recommended to help understand the true cause of the deaths and to make recommendations to improve quality and organization of care and prevent the recurrence of those that could have been prevented. Case reviews can help identify opportunities to improve existing systems without emphasizing blame or punishment.

“Beyond the Numbers” (BTN) is part of the package of tools adopted by the World Health Organization Making Pregnancy Safer, and is used by a number of countries as a guide on methods utilized by the professionals to create a surveillance system to review maternal deaths



and complications. The package and the tools are designed to provide valuable recommendations for systemic improvements and strengthening of maternal and perinatal care.

WHO/Europe has assisted introduction of this approach in 14 countries, and has piloted and rolled it out in 10, in close collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Zdrav Plus Project and other aid development partners.

In 2014, UNFPA EECARO provided its support to the WHO meeting "The impact of implementation of "Beyond the Numbers" approach in improving maternal and perinatal health", conducted in Bishkek, (April 2014). Strategizing the next steps of the initiative, the RO initiated the mapping of the country status concerning the involvement and further enrolment in BTN.

To expand the initiative and enrol new countries, the 4-day workshop organized by the UNFPA EECARO, the UNFPA Country Offices in the Western Balkans in collaboration with the WHOa Regional Office for Europe and the Regional Development Centre on Public Health Services in FYRM of the South Eastern European Network to introduce the BTN tools and methodology to countries in the Eastern European Region will be held in FYRM in 2014.

Purpose and results:

The workshop will be led by the WHO experts with a direct experience in facilitation and skills in helping the national teams of professionals optimize implementation of BTN methods. The workshop will introduce the concepts of BTN, help participants understand the methodology, elaborate on the near miss cases reviews and other methods of reviewing maternal deaths and emphasise the need to not only focus on the maternal mortality, but also on the maternal morbidity. Following the training, each country team will work with the facilitators to develop drafts of national action plans to introduce the maternal and perinatal death and/or morbidity review tools to help them in this process will be presented at the workshop.

The specific *objectives* of the workshop are:

1. To introduce principles of maternal mortality and morbidity case reviews using Beyond The Numbers approaches
2. To review the different methods of maternal mortality and morbidity audits already implemented in the European Region
3. To discuss which approach is the most feasible for each country
4. To start development of country specific action plans to introduce and implement maternal mortality and morbidity case reviews for systemic improvements of maternal care



Participants Profile:

- Health professionals (obstetricians/gynaecologists, midwives, neonatologists) responsible for quality of care, decrease of maternal mortality and helping improve the maternal and perinatal outcomes
- Representatives of MoH, health care planners and managers responsible for the area of maternal and newborn health whose mandate is to improve the quality of care provided and are in the position to take remedial actions based on the findings of the review;
- UNFPA CO programme staff - SRH focal point;
- Development partners, UN organizations