

Quality, Equity, Dignity

A Network for Improving Quality of Care
for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health



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Quality care for all

Both access to and quality of care are essential for ending preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths by 2030 and achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as sought by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is evidence that despite the progress made in increasing access and coverage, the gap in quality of care is contributing to unnecessary complications and deaths among women, newborns and children. The World Health Organization (WHO)

estimates that 303,000 mothers and 2.7 million newborn infants die annually¹ around the time of childbirth, and many more are affected by preventable illness. Provision of quality care is uneven, often failing to respect the rights and dignity of those who seek it. Countries will need to prioritize institutionalization of quality of care improvement in health services to ensure that “Every woman, child and adolescent receives quality care throughout the continuum of care”².

1 *Health in 2015: from MDGs to SDGs*, WHO

2 As per the WHO vision articulated in 2015

Quality, Equity and Dignity at the core of the Network

The **Network for Improving Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health** (Quality of Care Network) works to ensure that every pregnant woman, newborn and child receives good quality care throughout their life and care continuum. The Quality of Care Network is underpinned by the values of quality, equity and dignity and contributes towards the goals of the **Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health** for Every Woman Every Child. It aims to halve maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths in health facilities within five years, improve the quality of care of women and children, and patients' experience of care in the participating countries.

The Network, launched in February 2017, brings together ten pathfinder countries that are already making strides in improving quality of health services, and their local partners, with support from UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO. It backs the institutionalization and implementation of government-led national plans for quality improvement. The ministries of health of the ten Quality of Care Network countries of Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda, are working together to develop and implement evidence-based, yet context-specific, policies, strategies and intervention packages, to harvest implementation ideas, and to assemble local information and experience that already exist to improve the quality of health services. Government leadership has led to a growing partnership of development organisations, NGOs, private sector, professional associations and universities rallying around the Quality of Care Network.

Institutionalizing and improving quality of care

In 2015, WHO prioritized institutionalization of quality of care improvement in health services to ensure that "Every woman, child and adolescent receives quality care throughout the continuum of care". To operationalize this vision, in 2016, WHO published a quality of care framework and the first series of **eight standards to improve quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities**. They define what is required to achieve high quality care around the time of childbirth and are applicable to all health care facilities that offer maternity services. To address the life continuum, WHO has recently published **standards for improving quality of care for children and young adolescents in health facilities**. The standards place mothers, newborns and children at the centre of care by improving both the provision of, and patients' experience of, health care.

Driven by these evidence-based standards of care, the Quality of Care Network was created to support countries in achieving their targets to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths, and stillbirths, and to work towards Universal Health Coverage by pursuing four strategic objectives:

- **Focus on national leadership** by building and strengthening national and districts structures, institutions and mechanisms for improving quality of care in the health sector;
- **Accelerate action** through well-coordinated and harmonized efforts to improve quality of care using evidence-based standards, strategies and quality of care implementation packages of interventions;
- **Foster learning** through use of data to generate local evidence for co-development and sharing of knowledge and best practices on how to implement and sustain quality of care improvement;
- Develop, strengthen and sustain institutions and mechanisms for **accountability** for delivering quality health services.

The Network provides a platform for countries to ensure that quality of care becomes an integral part of health care delivery; it facilitates intercountry learning, knowledge sharing, and generation of local evidence and best practices. Network countries have established or are in the process of establishing strong leadership and governance structures for quality at all levels of the health system in their effort towards achieving Quality Universal Health Coverage.

Progress so far

Since the launch of the Quality of Care Network in 2017, the Network countries have made tremendous progress and are at different stages in their efforts to drive quality of care for maternal, newborn and child health:

- All countries established or strengthened government structures for quality of care at all levels, reinforced stakeholder coordination mechanisms, and harmonized methods and intervention packages for improving maternal and newborn quality of care.
- Countries have developed national quality of care implementation plans based on the quality of care initiatives, set national goals and targets, and consolidated tools and packages to enable quality improvement.
- Countries have mobilized and aligned local resources at the national and sub-national

levels through national coordination mechanisms that bring all partners together for implementing quality of care activities.

- Countries have selected learning districts and facilities that will be at the forefront in documenting local experiences and best practices, generating and sharing evidence to develop local effective and scalable strategies and intervention packages.
- Since April 2018, each country has started working with local institutions on setting up a learning system to harvest and build on the expertise and know-how that quality improvement teams are building, and share data, knowledge and experience to feed into further quality improvement interventions.
- Countries are currently integrating the newly launched WHO paediatric standards of care into their national roadmaps for integrated implementation of maternal, newborn and child quality of care improvement.

Many more countries have expressed interest in joining the Quality of Care Network, with Sierra Leone becoming the 10th country in December 2017.

Timeline: The Network for Improving Quality of Care (QoC) for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (January 2016–April 2018)

JANUARY 2016

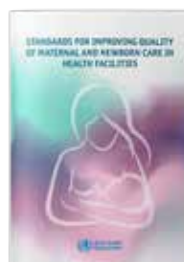
- Implementation guidance
- Effective implementation interventions proposed
- Learning Platform

JUNE 2016

- Orientation on QoC standards & implementation science
- Rapid mapping of QoC situation in countries

AUGUST 2016

WHO standards for improving quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities



OCTOBER 2016

Governments of nine pathfinder countries initiate engagement at the national level and prepare to join the Network

- Bangladesh
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- India
- Malawi
- Nigeria
- Uganda

From March 2017 and through 2018

Working groups:

- Implementation methods
- Monitoring
- Advocacy for Quality, Equity, Dignity



Webinar series:

- Series 1: Point of care quality improvement for maternal and newborn health
- Series 2: Quality of Care Country Highlights
- Series 3: Water, sanitation and hygiene for improved quality of care

Countries:

- Roadmaps developed
- Structures galvanized
- Preparation for implementation



www.qualityofcarenetwork.org

FEBRUARY 2017

Launch of the network in Lilongwe



- Joint statement, 14 February 2017
- Network strategic objectives of Leadership, Action, Learning, Accountability

DECEMBER 2017

Action:

From roadmaps to implementation (Dar es Salaam meeting)

Sierra Leone joins the Network

MARCH 2018

Countries leading implementation:

- Preparations for learning district orientation
- Defining national QoC improvement packages
- Development of monitoring framework

APRIL 2018



- WHO standards for improving quality of care for children and young adolescents in health facilities
- Learning: Developing national learning systems to support delivery of QoC (Entebbe meeting)

For more information and examples of national quality of care improvement work, see: www.qualityofcarenetwork.org

Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MCA),
World Health Organization
Contact: info@qualityofcarenetwork.org
Follow us on Twitter @qualitycareNET
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