

Improved maternal and newborn health in developing countries: the role of quality improvement

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Background

In southern Tanzania, uptake of facility births is high at 80%. Paradoxically, maternal and newborn mortality also remain high. These mortality rates are due to the poor quality of maternal and newborn health services.

Quality improvement engages stakeholders in a bottom-up approach that aims to identify context-specific problems and create strategies to address these problems.

Here we report the experience of applying quality improvement called QUADS in two districts to improve maternal and newborn health in southern Tanzania



Objectives

The QUADS intervention aims to integrate quality improvement within the district level health system and sustain it at the regional level for quality maternal and newborn health care, better care seeking, and improved health outcomes.

Methodology

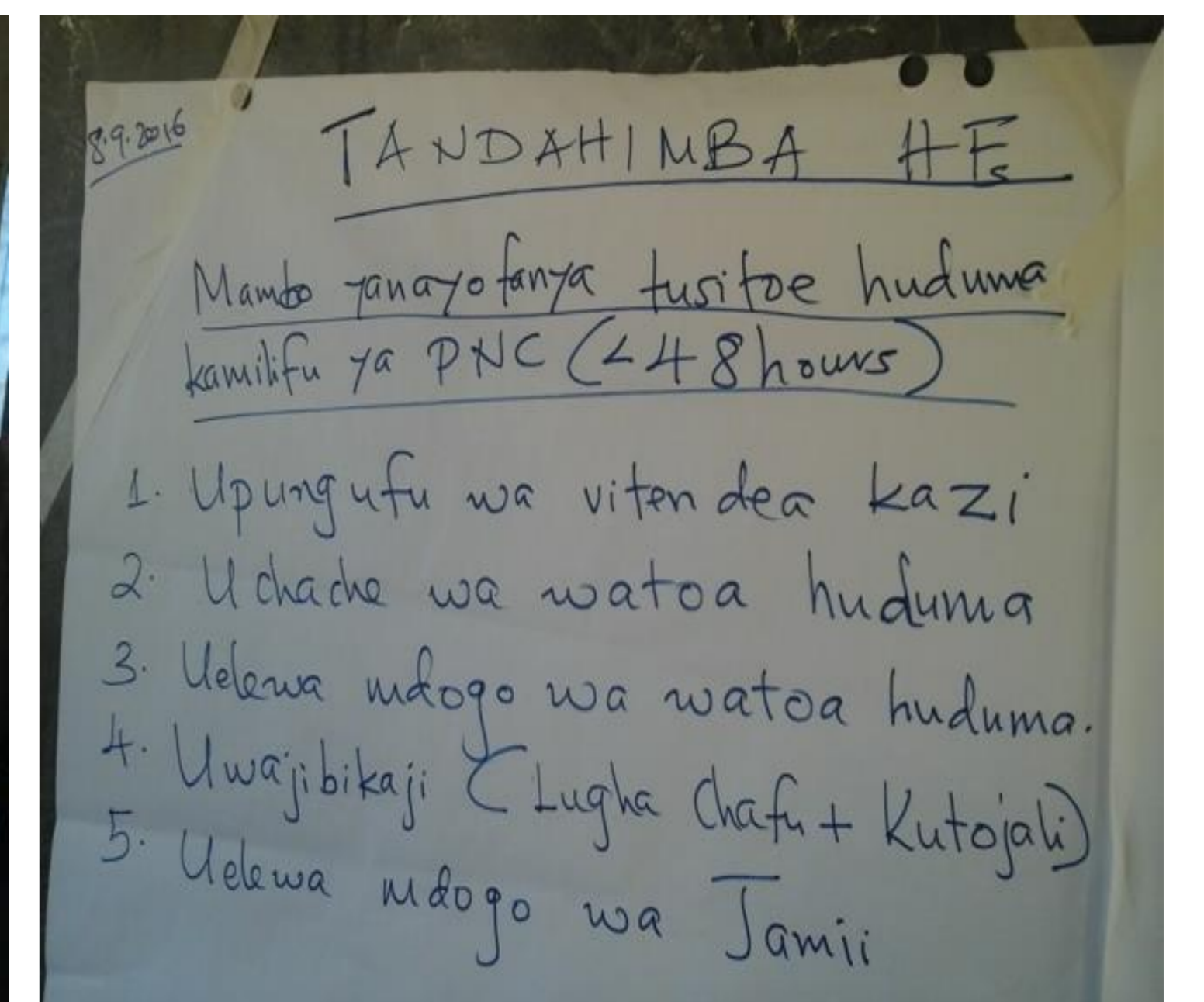
QUADS applies quality improvement at the community, health facility, and district levels. At each level, problems contributing to poor care-seeking and poor quality of care related to maternal and newborn health are addressed. In “learning sessions”, teams develop solutions to the issues they identify. Sessions are repeated quarterly, with new issues being added each time.

Results

In the first year of implementation, we have trained all CHMTs in two initial districts in quality improvement with the goal that they integrate it in their routine support of health service delivery.

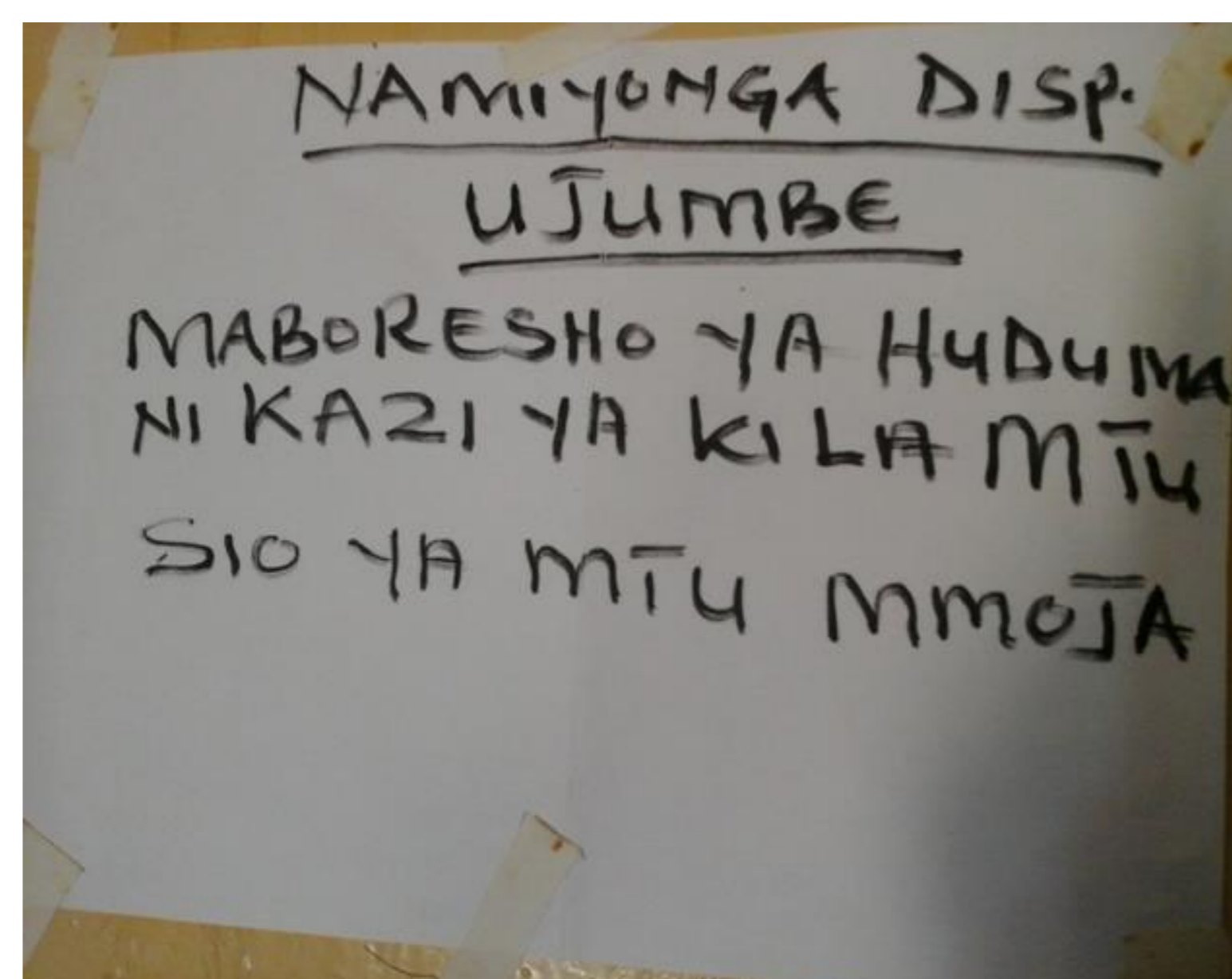
Health workers in 1/3 of the facilities in the two districts have been oriented in quality improvement.

Thus far, skills around problem identification in maternal and newborn health, data collection and recording, and the use of data to inform their improvement work have been emphasized.



Policy Implication

QUADS has helped to improve the level of understanding of key maternal and newborn health issues in each district. In general, the program continues to expand the knowledge base for quality improvement for maternal and newborn health in southern Tanzania, which may contribute positively to Tanzania's national quality improvement strategy.



Acknowledgement

This study is funded by International Development and Research Center (IDRC Canada) and implemented by Ifakara Health Institute and RHMT Mtwara (Tanzania) in collaboration with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (UK) and Sick Kid Foundation (Canada).