

Dissemination Workshop Report

Childhood mortality rates in Uganda: can we meet the millennium development goals? 16th November 2006, Kampala

A research dissemination workshop with the theme: “Childhood mortality rates in Uganda: can we meet the millennium development goals (MDGs)?” was held on the 16th November 2006 at the Sheraton hotel Kampala. Both the research and dissemination activities were sponsored by Team for Applied Research to Generate Effective Tools and Strategies for Communicable Disease Control (TARGETS) Consortium and The Department for International Development (DFID). The dissemination workshop was organized by Makerere University Institute of Public Health, The infectious Disease Institute, and The Ugandan Ministry of Health; outlined below were the objectives of this activity:

- Described the trends in childhood mortality rates in Uganda since 1948.
- Presented the reasons for the observed trends.
- Discussed appropriate interventions if we are to reach the millennium development goals in Uganda.

The 40 workshop participants were drawn from a wide variety of sectors including: the National Planning Authority Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Population Secretariat, World Health Organization, DFID, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Makerere University Institute of Public Health, Makerere University Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Infectious Disease Institute, Makerere University Medical School, Save the children (US), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Journalists, Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS foundation, District Directors of Health, Malaria Consortium, Center for Infectious Disease Control, and UNICEF.

Dr. Sam Zaramba, the Director General Ministry of Health was the chair of the first session and had this to say:

He congratulated the researchers for the work accomplished and was grateful for the workshop which was a bridge between the researchers and policy makers. Maternal and childhood mortality rates are of concern in many circles particularly because they are development indicators. He said that previously there had been flowery presentations on the achievement

of the nation but maternal mortality; childhood mortality rates show us a different picture.

He stressed the multi-sectoral nature of IMR and therefore every ministry had a part to play in lowering the IMR. He also expressed concern over the high and unacceptable IMR and should therefore be handled correctly and efficiently.

Prof. David Serwadda, the Director Makerere University Institute of Public Health (MUIPH) gave the overview of the objectives of TARGETS. He said through TARGETS we had so far completed a needs assessment on Malaria, TB and HIV. The current research had already been presented at a seminar at MUIPH to academicians. After this dissemination it was agreed that these results be disseminated to a wider audience including policy makers, development partners and researchers. The Director was therefore glad that NGOs, clinicians, donors and policy makers were represented during the workshop.

Hon. Emmanuel Otaala, the Minister of State for Primary Health Care at the Ministry of Health opened the workshop and expressed the concern over the persistently high IMR in the country. He also expressed his pleasure at the research focusing on the causes of this high indicator. He said,

“If we are to meet the MDGs by 2015 then today’s research has contributed to achieving this goal. One of the ways to develop key intervention strategies is by research.”

The honourable minister informed the meeting that the government had allocated 6 billion Uganda shillings to research which was about 15% of the national budget. He therefore encouraged everyone to identify pertinent issues for research. He also requested that whatever would be discussed in the meeting that day should be given to the Ministry of Health for action and policy formulation.

Presentations

There were three presentations by:

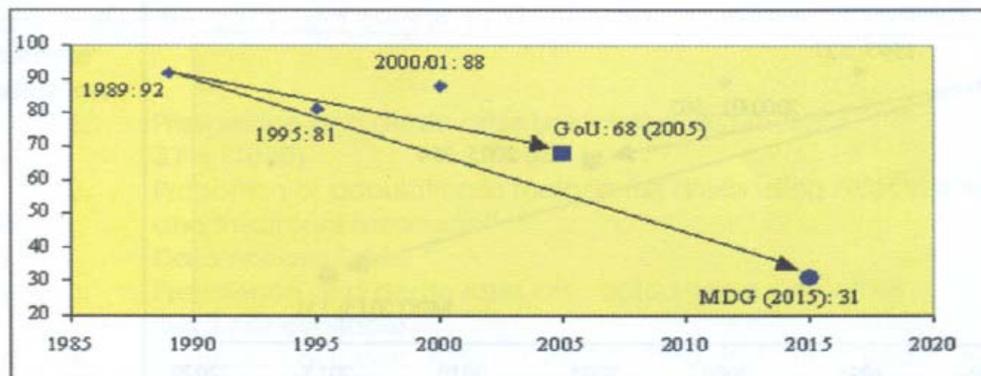
1. Dr. Natal Ayiga, the Head Department of Population studies Makerere University Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, presented “the trends in infant and under five mortality in Uganda.”

2. Juliet N. Babirye, lecturer in Department of Disease Control Makerere University Institute of Public Health presented “the determinants of childhood mortalities in Uganda”. And
3. Dr. F. Nuwaha presented “the reasons for childhood mortality in Uganda: can we meet the millennium development goals?”

Workshop Summary:

Infant and under-5 mortality rates have declined since 1948. However the rate of decline has been marginal. Childhood mortality stagnated between 1969 and 1991. This stagnation also caused a stagnation in life expectancy. The stagnation can be explained by the political and economic conditions prevailing during this time.

The rate of decline of childhood mortalities observed during the pre 1969 days are re-emerging after 1991 that is, a rate of 38 deaths/1000 every 10 years. However, more needs to be done to achieve the MDG expectations since we are currently off course (see figure below). According to the MDGs, Uganda’s infant mortality rate was expected to be 78 deaths per 1000 live births instead it was 88 deaths per 1000 live births in 2000/01.



Source: UDHS (1995, 2000/01)

GDP per capita and malaria influence Childhood mortality. However, malaria epidemics in western Uganda amplified by the *El Niño* weather phenomenon are responsible for the increase in U5MR during the period 1995-2000.

The workshop recommendations could be classified into three categories: interventions, methods of data collection and analysis, and future research.

1. Recommendations for interventions:

- Maintain Economic development with equitable distribution of wealth
- Improvement in peri-natal health care (proportion of children born under proper health care supervision)
- Malaria needs to be aggressively controlled: Universal coverage IPT, Bed nets and Access to treatment.
- Controlling HIV

2. Recommendations for the methods:

- Analysis of mortality indices should not only be dependent upon absolute increase or decrease but should be based on trends and on rate of decline that is, is the indicator as expected?
- The interval between indices was big and therefore shows little change between years. The only sources of data available were from the census reports and Uganda demographic health surveys. More accurate data on mortality is required e.g. use of universal birth and death registration.

General comments:

The research was good for planning purposes and the National Planning Authority requested for a copy of the report. We need more disseminations of this kind at the national level.

Closing:

The Minister of State for Investment in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Investment emphasized the need for leadership at grass root level in order to tackle many of the underlying causes to the high mortality indices in our country. The workshop had brought together a wide variety of stakeholders and that was a starting point. He closed the function at 1.30pm.

Achievements since Dissemination

As result of the dissemination the government of Uganda together with the development partners has decided to scale up the use of bed nets in Uganda. Over 5.8 million bed nets (from government and USAID) will be distributed to vulnerable groups.

Photos of the dissemination workshop



Some workshop participants



Dr. F. Nuwaha Presenting the reasons for the trends in childhood mortalities



Hon. Otaala, the Minister of State for Primary Health Care listening to Dr. Runumi the commissioner planning at the Ministry of Health.



Hon. Otaala talks to Journalists.



Dr. Natal Ayiga presenting the trends in childhood mortalities in Uganda



From left: Dr. Nsungwa (MOH), Dr. Kekitiinwa (PIDC) & Dr. Naikoba (Save the Children) discuss during a tea break.



The Director Makerere University Institute of Public Health Talks to William Salmond from EGPAF(Elizabeth Glazer) and to Jennifer Bakyawa a Journalist



Dr. Juliet N. Babirye presenting determinants of childhood mortalities



Some of the workshop participants



Closing remarks by Hon. Prof. Semakula Kiwanuka; State Minister for Investment, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Investment