

Abstract Title:**Adaptation of the WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist in Malawi.****Baltzell, Openshaw, Sayenda, Kutsamba, Mphande, Mwale, Rose, Connolly.****Background:**

In Malawi, persistent gaps in quality of maternal and neonatal health care contribute to suboptimal health outcomes, including excess morbidity and mortality. The World Health Organization developed the Safe Childbirth Checklist (WHO-SCC) to improve the quality of maternity care by standardizing evidence-based practices during labor, delivery, and immediate postpartum. Following one year of implementation of the WHO-SCC, coupled with intensive mentorship by experienced nurse-midwives, participating health facilities in Neno District, Malawi, reported decreased rates of maternal and neonatal complications. However, end users of the WHO-SCC recommended adaptation of the checklist to harmonize with Malawian national guidelines and national reproductive health priorities.

Methods:

Focus group discussions were held with nurse-midwives who used the SCC. National Malawian Reproductive Health guidelines were reviewed and compared with the WHO-SCC. Stakeholders in Neno District including local Ministry of Health representatives were invited to a meeting where the guidelines were evaluated to revise the tool to suit the local context. The revised tools were shared with district stakeholders for feedback. The proposed changes were presented to the Malawian Safe Motherhood Technical Working Group where the tool was further adapted to ensure fit with national standards.

Findings:

Based on feedback, the following SCC items were revised; 1) frequency of vital sign assessment; 2) management of severe hypertension; and 3) management of the third stage of labor. Additionally, guidelines addressing HIV status/PMTCT, assessment of febrile women for potential malaria infection, identifying and managing preterm labor, and administration of routine newborn medications were added. The revised checklist ("Malawi-SCC") is now in use in one additional urban district of Malawi, and a national committee has been formed to consider nationwide implementation of the document.

Interpretation:

The WHO-SCC tool is a template for evidence-based maternity care in low-resource settings, but adaptation is necessary to ensure compatibility with local guidelines and reproductive health priorities. In one district, an intensive mentorship program focusing on the WHO-SCC led to decreased rates of obstetric and neonatal complications, and adapting the WHO-SCC to the Malawian context has the potential to improve maternal and newborn health outcomes.

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