

INTRODUCTION

- Essential maternal and newborn care services lack adequate resources and emergency plans in Malawi
- In March 2023, Cyclone Freddy hit Southern Malawi exacerbating the already strained healthcare system
- The cyclone left over 600,000 people displaced, over 500 dead, and 500 missing
- Pregnant women among the displaced faced heightened risks due to limited health care resources
- Heeding the call to intervene, midwives were mobilized to support displaced pregnant and lactating mothers

OBJECTIVES

- To advocate and enhance disaster preparedness for maternal health care in Malawi
- To mobilize and coordinate midwifery care to the survivors

METHODS

- Mobilization of midwives through social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) to provide routine perinatal care in an emergency setting
- Collaboration with the International Confederation of Midwives, and Association of Malawian Midwives (AMAMI) to increase on-the-ground workforce
- Approvals from Blantyre District Health Office to provide midwifery care to Cyclone survivors in camps

PICTORIAL FOCUS



Mudslide Path (A) and Destruction Caused (B) during Cyclone Freddy; Photo by Dr Vincent Mkochi, 2023



Well Wishers Providing Aid to Cyclone Survivors in a Camp; Photo by Dr G Gadama, 2023



Midwives Providing Utilities and Clinical Care to Women in Camps; Picture by team member, 2023



FINDINGS

A team of 26 providers (3 clinical officers, 20 nurse-midwives, 3 data clerks) provided care for 5 outreach clinics across 5 displacement camps for 5 weeks.

- 44 obstetric patients were reached
- Services provided during these clinics included:
 - Initiating antiretroviral treatment (ART) to a newly diagnosed HIV-positive pregnant mother,
 - Prescribing syphilis treatment, and
 - Identifying eclampsia and other pregnancy-related conditions.
- Providers diagnosed 2 cases of multiple gestation through ultrasound scanning, 2 anemia cases, and a woman at risk of hemorrhage due to a previous uterine scar
- These patients were referred and transported to the tertiary hospital for ongoing care

DISCUSSION

Advocacy plays a pivotal role in mobilizing resources and support during crises, as demonstrated by the impact of Cyclone Freddy on maternal and newborn services in Malawi.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is crucial; leading to timely interventions, optimization of resources, and significant improvements in maternal and newborn health outcomes in challenging circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Train midwives in advocacy to effectively mobilize resources during crises
- Foster interdisciplinary approaches for timely and optimal healthcare interventions
- Prioritize the well-being of mothers and children in emergency planning and response strategies

FINANCIAL DECLARATION

- The UCSF GAIN project provided funds that supported the purchase of resources, midwives' allowances, and cost of transportation
- The International Confederation of Midwives provided financial support to the AMAMI which further supported midwifery activities to Cyclone Freddy survivors in the Southern Region of Malawi