

# Overcoming Barriers for timely notification of community deaths in the context of a Mortality Surveillance Programme in Southern Mozambique

Constantino Cumbane<sup>1</sup>; Maria Maixenchs<sup>1,2</sup>; Rui Guilaze<sup>1</sup>; Inácio Mandomando<sup>1,3</sup>; Ariel Nhacolo<sup>1</sup>; Quique Bassat<sup>1,2,4,5</sup>; Khátia Munguambe<sup>1,6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centro de Investigação em Saúde de Manhiça, Maputo, Moçambique ; <sup>2</sup>IS Global, Hospital Clínic - Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain; <sup>3</sup>Instituto Nacional de Saúde, Ministério de Saúde, Maputo, Moçambique; <sup>4</sup>Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA), Barcelona, Spain; <sup>5</sup>Paediatric Infectious Diseases Unit, Paediatrics Department, Hospital Sant Joan de Déu (University of Barcelona), Barcelona, Spain; <sup>6</sup>Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Faculdade de Medicina, Maputo, Moçambique

## Background

- Child Health Mortality Prevention Surveillance (CHAMPS) is implementing Minimally Invasive Tissue Sampling (MITS) to track the causes of death (CoD) in children under-five (U5) and this requires to identify deaths within 24 hours after its occurrence.
- At local level, CHAMPS uses community and research centre's platforms for community death notifications (CDN) namely: Demographic surveillance field workers, community leaders (heads of 10 houses, heads of 60 houses, neighborhood chiefs);
- A qualitative rapid assessment to describe current CHAMPS's processes of CDN, barriers encountered, and further optimization was conducted in Manhiça District, southern Mozambique.

## Methods

Qualitative Rapid Assessment  
February to March, 2020

### Data Collection

#### Data Collection Tools

- ✓ 11 Semi structured interviews
- ✓ 1 Focus Group Discussion
- ✓ 1 Informal Conversation

#### Target group

- ✓ 7 CDN who never reported community death (CD)
- ✓ 6 CDN who have reported CD within 24 hours
- ✓ 2 Chief of blocks who had never reported an CD
- ✓ 2 Deceased family member whose MITS were performed
- ✓ 2 Deceased family member who refused MITS
- ✓ 1 Head of 10 houses who had never reported an CD

### Data Analysis

Content & Framework analysis

## Results

- CD notifications to CHAMPS are centralized by the neighborhood chiefs (NCs), as shown on figure 1
- Local leaders and influential persons in the community as matrons, heads of 10 and 60 houses, heads of land, religious leaders and the female organization leaders were indicated by participants as the appropriate persons to report deaths to CHAMPS.
- But there is some reluctance from the part of the CDNs, who are concerned breach of hierarchical communication:

*"If you offer these incentives to the head of 60 houses and then tell them "whatever information you find you should call us", they will always communicate with you and we, the neighborhood secretaries, will not have any work" (Focus group discussion, community leaders)*

- The U5 deceased children's families sometimes inform directly to the CDNs when they are near to them.
- Before reporting the death to CHAMPS, local leaders use to go to the deceased's home to:
  - Confirm that the death occurred; learn about the death circumstances
  - Get information about the characteristics of the deceased (i.e. age, sex)
  - Ask permission to notify the death to CHAMPS;
  - To explain to the families about the possibility of MITS being performed on the deceased.

## Conclusions

- There is a hierarchical pattern of death notification that must be obeyed within the community.
- The most used means for report CD to the CHAMPS was a telephone, it was indicated as the most appropriate, quick and easiest.
- Some practical barriers to notification were identified.
- There are potential death notifiers that the community trusts which had not been included as former CHAMPS notifiers
- Key recommendations for improving death notifications included a decentralized death notification system, involving different community members without jeopardizing community structures of power relations, community sensitization on the importance of reporting deaths, and using a toll-free call centre service.

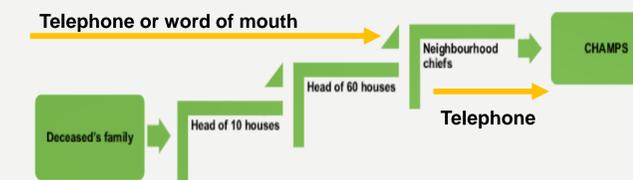


Figure 1: CD notifications to CHAMPS

## Barriers encountered for CD notifications

- Lack of awareness of the call Centre phone numbers
- Telephone Operators occasional unavailability
- CHAMPS Call Centre failure to return the NCs missed calls
- Family members forgetfulness of reporting a death due to their focus on funeral arrangements
- Difficulty to reach out NCs living far from where the death occurred
- NCs absence at the time of the death
- Lack of cell phone airtime



CHAMPS



cism  
centro de  
investigação  
em saúde de  
manhiça



Ministério da Saúde



cooperación  
española



ISGlobal



EMORY  
UNIVERSITY

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

E-mail:  
constantino.cumbane@manhica.net  
www.manhica.org