

Factors influencing efficacy of provision of maternal and reproductive health care: a qualitative analysis of extra-governmental organizations in Nairobi, Kenya

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Background

Maternal mortality is a global health epidemic with crippling economic and social consequences. It impacts women, their families and communities alike. The death of a mother increases the risk of child mortality, decreases the likelihood that surviving children will finish school, and creates a financial burden, as the family must somehow make up the income brought in by the mother and the hours of housework she completes. Kenya came nowhere near meeting the target reduction set by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which aimed for a three-quarter reduction in maternal mortality in all countries. Access to quality and affordable reproductive and maternal health care is vital to reducing maternal mortality. However, Kenya's government health care system is overburdened and under-resourced, especially when it comes to reproductive and maternal health. Extra-governmental organizations play a vital role in filling in gaps in access to care, especially for rural and urban poor women. The slums of Nairobi, where this research is focused, offer a very specific set of challenges to helping women access care. Cost is the largest barrier to accessing care, and while the informal nature of the slums creates infrastructural barriers leading to major disparities between women in Nairobi-city and women in the slums.



<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>

Methods

In this study, a combination of semi-structure interviews and participant observations were used to complete qualitative analyses of five extra-governmental clinics which offer maternal and reproductive health services. The analyses aimed to fulfill three key objectives:

- (1) Identify the interventions offered by each organization
- (2) Understand the economics, infrastructure, and social relationships of each organization
- (3) Examine the success or barriers to success of each organization.

Objective							
This research aims to identify key aspects within the economics, infrastructure, and social relations of the organization which allow for or hinder the efficacy of extra-governmental organizations working on issues of maternal and reproductive health, which could be used to improve implementation of services. For the purposes of this research, efficacy, defined as meeting organization-level goals and objectives.							

Organizations

My sample included five organizations. These organizations varied on a number of factors, including organizational origins, clinic locations, and services provided (Table 1). From these organizations I conducted a total of nine interviews with employees. I attempted to meet with at least one administrator and one service provider in order to get a broader sense of the organization. For all except Organization 4, I managed to interview at least one employee who played each role.

	Organizational origins	Clinic Locations		Services Provided			
	Kenyan	International	Nairobi only	Other Locations	Maternal Health Only	General Health Services	Health and Other
Org 1	X			X	X		
Org 2	X		X			X	
Org 3		X		X		X	
Org 4	X		X				X
Org 5	X			X			X

Table 1. Organizational characteristics

Results and Discussion

The results focused on three thematic areas: economics, infrastructure, and social relations.

Economics refers to all portions of the organization regarding funding, including, but not limited to, sources of funding, stipulations to receive funding, budget allocation, and general economic health.

Subthemes:

- Funding
- Price of services

Infrastructure refers to all portions of the organization related to the administration and managing of the organization, including but not limited to administrative positions, and communication between administrators and service providers.

Subthemes:

- Evaluation
- Client evolution and identification of client needs

Social intervention refers to all portions of the organization that involve external relations, including but not limited to the clients of the organization, the communities in which the organizations are located, and other organizations in the community.

Subthemes:

- Education
- Social intervention

Future Directions

There are many areas that were not fully explored through this study that constitute relevant and interesting future directions for this body of research. First, it is important to consider the budget of the organizations, to determine if they are spending their money as effectively as possible and if there is any waste in their spending. Second, we need to address the pervasive emphasis on the donor, which gives a huge amount of power to those with the money, rather than those with the understanding of local need, when deciding how to structure global health services.

At the infrastructural level, there seemed to occasionally be a disconnect between what was communicated to me by the administrators and what was communicated by the service providers. The two groups often had different perspectives on how well the organizations were doing and what changes could be made.

I believe there is merit in each of these possible future directions for research. However, as I move forward from this thesis, I personally want to focus more on the idea of women's rights as determinants of maternal health. I believe it is the only sustainable way to move towards the eradication of preventable maternal mortality (because I know it will be impossible to eradicate it completely). I am particularly interested in the social interventions the extra-governmental organizations I worked with used. I want to further explore the way we can use social interventions in global health efforts to deal with disease, creating a more comprehensive and integrated approach to improving maternal health.

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