

Intervention associated with reduced disrespect and abuse during childbirth in Tanzania

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An intervention aimed at community and healthcare facility stakeholders was associated with a reduction in the prevalence of disrespect and abuse seen during childbirth in Tanzania, according to a new study published in *PLOS Medicine* by Stephanie Kujawski from Columbia University, USA, and colleagues.

Over the past decade, investigative reports have documented abusive and discriminatory treatment of women in labor and delivery rooms in countries around the world. In the new study—dubbed *Staha* for the Swahili word for respect—researchers involved local community members and healthcare workers in the Tanga region of Tanzania in a process to analyze their own experiences and consider actions to reduce rates of disrespect and [abuse](#). In the study intervention, [local community](#) and facility stakeholders adapted a nationally developed charter to build consensus on respectful care, and these norms and standards were activated through a maternity ward quality-improvement process. Two hospitals were included in the study with one randomly assigned to receive the intervention. Prevalence of disrespect and abuse was measured using survey data from women who had been discharged from the maternity ward after delivery, including in 1388 women at baseline and in 1,680 women 10 months after support for the intervention's implementation ended.

Before the intervention, 18 percent of [women](#) reported disrespect and

abuse during delivery. Compared with no intervention, the likelihood of self-reported disrespectful and abusive care was reduced by 66% after the [intervention](#) (95% CI: 0.21-0.58, p

"Our findings have important implications for the way forward as the Respectful Maternal Care field evolves," the authors say. "Eliminating disrespect and abuse requires individual behavior change, organizational and systems change, and, ultimately, deeper societal transformation. These are complex, multidimensional challenges that do not evaporate just by order of a court or mandate of a minister."

More information: Kujawski SA, Freedman LP, Ramsey K, Mbaruku G, Mbuyita S, Moyo W, et al. (2017) Community and health system intervention to reduce disrespect and abuse during childbirth in Tanga Region, Tanzania: A comparative before-and-after study. *PLoS Med* 14(7): e1002341. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002341

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