



SURG
AFRICA

SCALING UP SAFE SURGERY FOR DISTRICT AND RURAL POPULATIONS IN AFRICA



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The Scaling Up Safe Surgery for District and Rural Populations in Africa (SURG-Africa) project is funded by the EU Horizon 2020 programme. This highly ambitious implementation research project aims to strengthen district surgical systems and services to ensure equitable access to surgery for rural populations of Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania.

This will be achieved through establishing a regular programme of effective district level supervision, enabling specialists from referral hospitals to be trainers and mentors of district hospital surgical teams.

The project will support ministries of health to strengthen district surgical information systems and to scale-up safe surgery country-wide.

SURG-AFRICA APPROACH:

A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach engaged relevant sectoral stakeholders in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia in the design of a country-specific, needs-driven intervention during the period March 2017 - March 2018.

This included the following steps:

- > Consultation with national representatives of the Ministry of Health and professional associations in each country.
- > Completion of an in-depth situation analysis to assess surgical capacity and gaps in 85 district health facilities across the three countries to identify eligible hospitals from which intervention and control sites were purposively selected. The geographical focus of the intervention is on the Southern region in Malawi, the Northern zone in Tanzania and in Zambia mostly on the Southern province.
- > Organised workshops with representatives from intervention district hospitals (IDH) in each country to tailor the SURG-Africa supervision model to meet their needs.
- > Delivered Training of Trainer workshops for supervisory teams (surgical specialists, anaesthetists and theatre nurses).
- > Developed bespoke plans of action for the IDHs, including remote mentorship, direct supervision and in-service training, to be delivered through a regular programme of quarterly 2-day supervisory visits.

The project builds on an earlier study conducted in Zambia (COST Africa), which showed the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of a model comprising supervision, mentorship and capacity-building of district level hospital surgical staff, delivered by surgical specialists based at referral hospitals.

Five billion people are without access to safe, affordable surgical and anaesthetic care with low and middle income countries worst affected. Only 6% of needed surgery takes place in the poorest countries. 33 million people endure catastrophic expenditure in paying for essential, often life-saving surgery (Meara et al. 2015).

SURG-AFRICA OBJECTIVES:



- > **Strengthening individual and team surgical skills in district health facilities**
To enhance confidence of surgical service providers, improve capacity and increase the number and range of surgical procedures performed.



- > **Improving referral practices**
To decrease the number of unnecessary surgical referrals from the districts and to ease the surgical caseload at referral hospitals.



- > **Establishing an effective, real-time consultation and support network based on mobile technology**
To facilitate more responsive communication and referral feedback mechanism between district health facilities and referral hospitals.



- > **Improving surgical data collection**
For better planning and performance monitoring.

The SURG-Africa model has received enthusiastic support from stakeholders at all levels, especially the Ministry of Health and surgical specialist associations, being locally led and owned. The full range of benefits, including data on effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, will be monitored throughout the life of the project and the intervention model will be tested and evaluated in view of national scale up and transferability of results internationally.

The project brings together partners from three African and three European countries, including academic research institutions, health services providers and national and regional sectoral networks.

For more information:
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