

Needs Assessments of Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care Overview and Introduction to Materials

Emergency obstetric and newborn care services are needed to manage complications of childbirth and are critical to saving the lives of mothers and newborns around the world. Needs Assessments for emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC) are health facility-based cross-sectional surveys that collect detailed information needed to plan for the improvement of EmONC services. The EmONC Needs Assessment methodology and the toolkit of documents needed to plan for, conduct, and use the results of a Needs Assessment have been developed by the Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program (AMDD) at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, NY, USA in conjunction with UN agencies, ministries of health, and other partners.

This Overview and Introduction to Materials summarizes the Needs Assessment process and the documents that support it. AMDD is available to offer technical support to countries throughout the Needs Assessment process. We recommend contacting AMDD if you are considering conducting an EmONC Needs Assessment. Find more information at www.amddprogram.org.

Needs Assessments of Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care

Each year, roughly 350,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth and four million intrapartum and early neonatal deaths occur. Many of these deaths are preventable through good-quality, accessible EmONC. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5, launched in 2000, call for a reduction in the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters and the child mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. EmONC Needs Assessments play a critical role in helping individual countries determine the best way to achieve these goals within their unique country contexts. Through examining health facility functioning, the Needs Assessments measure the capacity of the health system to respond to direct obstetric and newborn complications.

The general objectives of the Needs Assessment are to:

- establish a baseline useful in realizing a national plan of action to improve EmONC services, and
- guide policy, planning, and prioritization to strengthen the health system using EmONC as a point of entry.

To meet these objectives, the following areas are assessed at the health facility-level: health facility infrastructure, equipment, and supplies; health worker availability and competency; and, use and quality of EmONC services. The results can be used to strengthen national policies, establish monitoring systems, enhance professional school curricula, and guide district-level planning. The assessment methodology is based on over 10 years of experience conducting Needs Assessments in over 50 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and on the publication *Monitoring emergency obstetric care: a handbook*, published in 2009 by WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and AMDD.

The Process and Roles

The EmONC Needs Assessment is a significant undertaking that requires the input of several individuals and groups. It is composed of three phases: advocacy and planning; conducting the Needs Assessment; and, moving from data to action. Together, these phases can take 12-18 months. The Needs Assessment is most often national in scope, and can be a census, restricted census, or sampling of facilities. The process and roles may vary from assessment to assessment.

EmONC Needs Assessments are ideally headed by a country core team that includes the ministry of health, UN agencies, and other partners. The team is formed during initial advocacy around the assessment. This team oversees the entire process of the Needs Assessment from planning through data

collection, analysis, report writing, and action planning. It also advocates for the implementation of recommendations based on assessment results. Dedicated local staff, consultants, and/or contracted research institutions may be appointed to assist the country core team with day-to-day tasks. The Needs Assessment implementation team closely overlaps with the core country team. The implementation team is involved in detailed work of coordinating and conducting the Needs Assessment, including data collector training, fieldwork, and data entry and analysis. Often data collection, management, and analysis are contracted to a public or private individual or organization, which in some cases produces the final report with support from the country core team. AMDD is available to offer technical support to the process as needed.

The AMDD EmONC Toolkit of Curricular Materials and Guidance Documents

The AMDD EmONC Toolkit contains documents needed to plan for and conduct an EmONC Needs Assessment. These documents are not intended to be read sequentially. Rather, they are complementary resources designed for the varying collaborators in the Needs Assessment. For readers who have little background on the EmONC Needs Assessment process, it may be useful to start with the Needs Assessment Facilitation Guide.

Materials and documents include:

Data Collection Modules

This series of documents provides the standard questionnaires (modules) needed to gather the data in an EmONC Needs Assessment. Countries can adapt these modules to the local context. The National Information Module is administered by the country core team before the Needs Assessment data collection begins in order to develop appropriate terms of reference and agree upon modifications to the modules. The data collection teams administer modules one through nine during the data gathering phase.

Data Collector's Manual

This manual is a reference for all data collectors. It provides detailed information about the study methodology, general rules for data collection, and a module-by-module guide to data collection.

Needs Assessment Facilitation Guide*

This guide familiarizes the country core team with the entire EmONC Needs Assessment process, from advocacy and planning to conducting the Needs Assessment, dissemination, and action-planning.

Data Collectors Training: Trainer's Guide*

This guide provides instruction on developing the skills and knowledge of data collectors. It includes 16 session plans that familiarize data collectors with the modules and help them to gain skills needed to complete the modules.

Implementation Team Training: Trainer's Guide*

Along with the Needs Assessment Facilitation Guide, this guide orients the implementation team – the group that will coordinate and conduct data collection and management – to the EmONC Needs Assessment process. It includes a training-of-trainers component for those who will be participating in or leading the data collectors training which uses the Data Collectors Training: Trainer's Guide.

Data Analysis Guide*

This guide functions as a guide for analyzing the data collected during the Needs Assessment. The guide includes sample tables from reports of previously conducted Needs Assessments.

* Please email AMDD at info@amddprogram.org to request these materials.

We hope that these materials will be relevant and helpful for country teams as they consider whether an EmONC Needs Assessment is appropriate, plan for the assessment, collect and analyze data, and plan for evidence-based interventions using the results.

For more information or to access these resources please visit www.amddprogram.org.