

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Causes of Maternal Deaths in Sierra Leone from 2016 to 2019: Analysis of Districts Maternal Death Surveillance and Response Data
AUTHORS	Shafiq, Yasir; Caviglia, Marta; Juheh Bah, Zainab; Tognon, Francesca; Orsi, Michele; K. Kamara, Abibatu; Claudia, Caracciolo; Moses, Francis; Manenti, Fabio; Barone-Adesi, Francesco; Sessay, Tom

VERSION 1 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Zembe, Jolleen African Union Commission
REVIEW RETURNED	24-Aug-2023

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This was a very interesting article for Sierra Leone , thank you for giving me the opportunity to review the paper. Topic : Relevant and well presented</p> <p>Abstract well written and straight to the point, However support statement line 51 and 52 page 3. Line 73 page 4- reference Line 79 page 4 reference Line 81 It may be interesting about one or initiative that were carried out to improve maternal health and strengthen health systems.</p> <p>Results Tables and results well presented</p> <p>Discussion Line 192 - May you highlight the progress of the SGDs so far or just evidence of progress Line 227 page 6 please support statement.</p> <p>Conclusion Well presented.</p>
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REVIEWER	Meh, Catherine Unity Health Toronto
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Nov-2023

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This manuscript is timely and addresses an important concern for Sierra Leone. Some minor revisions are needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please, specify the method used to derive confidence intervals for all estimates reported. - What proportions of births occur in and outside health facilities in Sierra Leone and at the district level? - Clarify if the physicians who assigned the ICD for maternal deaths
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	<p>were generalists or OB/GYN. Were they specially trained to correctly assign maternal cause of death? What was the definition of maternal death used in the study and the MDSR database?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The authors mention that about 10% of deaths was captured through verbal autopsy. Explain how this was performed and whether the causes typically assigned to this group differ significantly from those assigned to facility-based deaths. - Expand on the process of determining and assigning the cause of death ICD. - Describe the sources through which maternal deaths are identified and whether these are channels established by the MOHS
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer comments	Author's response
Please revise the title of your manuscript to include the research question, study design and setting. This is the preferred format of the journal	Thanks, we have now changed it to: "Causes of Maternal Deaths in Sierra Leone from 2016 to 2019: Analysis of Districts Maternal Death Surveillance and Response Data"
Please revise the 'Strengths and limitations of this study' section of your manuscript (after the abstract). This section should contain up to five short bullet points, no longer than one sentence each, that relate specifically to the methods. The novelty, aims, results or expected impact of the study should not be summarized here.	Added – Page 2
Along with your revised manuscript, please include a copy of the STROBE checklist indicating the page/line numbers of your manuscript where the relevant information can be found (https://strobe-statement.org/index.php?id=strobe-home).	We have provided it now.
Support statement line 51 and 52 page 3.	Thanks, we have supported the statement with reference. Highlighted in yellow on page 4
Line 73 page 4- reference Line 79-page 4 reference	Done, we have supported the statement with reference. Highlighted in yellow on page 4
Line 81 It may be interesting about one or initiative that were carried out to improve maternal health and strengthen health systems.	We have added information as suggested. Page 4, line 125
Line 192 - May you highlight the progress of the SGDs so far or just evidence of progress	We have added information. Page 4, line 119
Line 227 page 6 please support statement.	Added, page 9, line 310
Please, specify the method used to derive confidence intervals for all estimates reported.	Thanks for highlighting this. We used binomial exact method in Stata. Page 6, line 211
- What proportions of births occur in and outside health facilities in Sierra Leone and at the district level?	This wasn't part of dataset and analysis, but we have discussed this point in the discussion now. Page 4, line 127
Clarify if the physicians who assigned the ICD for maternal deaths were generalists or OB/GYN. Were they specially trained to correctly assign maternal cause of death? What was the definition of maternal death used in the study and the MDSR database?	We have added the details now to explain this. Page 5, line 173 onwards

The authors mention that about 10% of deaths was captured through verbal autopsy. Explain how this was performed and whether the causes typically assigned to this group differ significantly from those assigned to facility-based deaths.	We have added the details now to explain this. Page 5, line 173 onwards
Expand on the process of determining and assigning the cause of death ICD.	Thanks for mentioning this, we added more information. Page 6, line 186 onwards
Describe the sources through which maternal deaths are identified and whether these are channels established by the MOHS	We have addressed this as well. Page 5, line 173 onwards

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Meh, Catherine Unity Health Toronto
REVIEW RETURNED	14-Dec-2023
GENERAL COMMENTS	None.