

Supporting Information Appendix S1: Data collection tool (IDIs GUIDE)

Study Title: Navigating healthcare system gaps across the obstetric fistula continuum of care: a multi-province qualitative study in Zambia.

Introduction by the interviewer

- Introduce yourself and the note-taker
- Thank the participant for turning up and for consenting to participate in the IDI
- Remind the participant to use the assigned unique number for identification and not her real name, to feel free to narrate her lived experience with OF, with assurance that the information she shares will be kept confidential.
- Give the participant a chance to introduce herself using her unique number.

Questions and probes

Women experience challenges in accessing maternal health services during their reproductive age, leading to a variety of poor health outcomes, including obstetric fistula.

I will now ask you some questions about your experience living with an obstetric fistula.

Just to begin with, please answer the following questions:

Section 1: Socio-demographics

- a) Respondent's unique ID number:
- b) Date of interview:/...../.....
- c) Time of interview:
- d) Place of interview:
- e) District:
- f) Number of live childbirths:
- g) How many antenatal care visits did you make during the previous pregnancy?: Number:
- h) Place of delivery for the previous childbirth: 1. Health facility: ☐ 2. Home: ☐
3. Other: ☐ (Specify).....
- i) Current age.....
- j) Marital Status: 1. Married: ☐ 2. Separated: ☐ 3. Divorced: ☐
4. Windowed: ☐ 5. Never married: ☐
- k) Nature of marriage, if married: 1. Monogamous: ☐ 2. Polygamous: ☐
- l) Highest education attained: 1. No formal education: ☐ 2. Primary: ☐
3. Secondary: ☐ 4. Tertiary: ☐
- m) Current employment status: 1. Yes: ☐ 2. No..... ☐
- n) Fistula repair status: 1. Repaired and fully cured ☐ 2. Repaired with stress leakage: ☐
3. Not repaired: ☐

Section 2: Childbirth background

1. What challenges in accessing medical help did you experience during the childbirth leading up to experiencing the leakage of urine/feces through the vagina?

Probe: *delaying in deciding to go to the health facility, delaying in reaching the health facility, delay in receiving care at the health facility.*

Follow-up: *For any delay mentioned, why do you think it happened that way? (if not already mentioned). Think about the use of syntocinon herbs and being attended to by a traditional birth attendant at home, waiting for the husband or another powerholder to make the decision, no transport or long distance to the health facility, no or overwhelmed skilled healthcare provider at the health facility, inadequate delivery supplies or spaces (labour room being used by another woman in labour).*

2. Kindly share with me any other illnesses that you had before or during childbirth that might have contributed to the development of the leakage of urine/feces through the vagina after delivery?

Probe: *Did you experience high blood pressure, elevated blood pressure with convulsions, infections including HIV and STI, Diabetes Mellitus, or pelvic deformity?*

Follow-up: *what was your baby's birth weight (the birth leading up to the urine/feces leakage)? Please verify from the Under-5 Clinic Card, if possible.*

3. How many weeks after delivery did the leakage start?

This interview targets women who have experienced an obstetric fistula, that is, a leakage of either urine or faeces in the vagina after childbirth, and we are interested in hearing more about your experience.

Section 3: Lived experience

Access healthcare, work, and public space:

1. What was your reaction when you noticed the signs and symptoms of leaking urine or faeces through the vagina?
2. What action did you take to seek help?

Probe for: *the sequence of events in seeking help, medical or otherwise, to capture support systems and alternative services (traditional healers, spiritual interventions, etc.)*

3. Why did you select to seek help from the person/place mentioned above?
4. Who decided to choose when and where to seek help?
5. What challenges or barriers have you experienced in accessing and receiving treatment at the health facility since the start of the leaking urine/feces?

Probe for: *availability of family or community support, healthcare providers' attitude, physical barriers such as location or transportation; money, or other financial needs.*

6. What has been your experience doing your work or duties for income generation?

Probe for: *employers/employees' attitudes; if selling merchandise, how customers regard her; how they respect privacy; the quality of the support they provide.*

7. As a woman with an obstetric fistula, what has been your experience accessing public social spaces like the church, school, health facilities, marketplace, etc.?

Probe for: *reaction by community members; family, friends, and community leaders.*

Family support:

8. Kindly share with me how supportive your family has been after the obstetric fistula started

Probe for: *how family members may have been affected by the condition; support by spouse and family members, if any; any challenges faced with the family.*

9. How did having an obstetric fistula affect your relationships and sex life?

Self-support:

9. What steps have you taken to continue leading your life as normally as possible regarding work, parenting, and social engagement?
10. What have been your coping strategies?
11. If you could speak to the leaders of your community, what recommendations would you give to them to improve health services for you and other women now and in the future?

Conclusion

That is the end of my questions for today. Thank you so much for your participation. Before we wrap up, is there anything that you would like to add on these topics that I haven't asked and that you think is important for us to know? Thank you again.