

# Summary: MORE MAMaZ volunteerism study

## About the Study

The aim of the MORE MAMaZ volunteerism study was to contribute to the evidence base on how to operate and maintain effective and sustainable health volunteer programmes in Zambia.

The study was undertaken in two parts: a qualitative study in November and December 2015 and a quantitative survey in March 2016. Approximately 10% (42) of the intervention sites supported by MORE MAMaZ and its predecessor programme, MAMaZ were included in the study. The study focused on Safe Motherhood Action Group (SMAG) volunteers and Emergency Transport System (ETS) riders.

## Key Findings

- **Age:** The majority of community health volunteers trained by MAMaZ and MORE MAMaZ were aged between 26 and 40 years old.
- **Level of Effort:** The level of effort of the volunteers was equivalent to less than five hours per week in four districts; a much higher level of effort was identified in Chama, possibly because of long distances.
- **Workload:** Volunteers perceived their workload to be manageable; voluntary activities were organised to fit in with other demands on the volunteers' time.
- **Retention Rates:** High retention rates were evident: 82 percent of volunteers trained more than four years ago and 95 percent of those trained less than two years ago were still working. These rates are substantially higher than many other community health volunteer programmes.
- **Motivation:** Volunteers were primarily motivated by altruism and a wish to help their communities. This finding confirms the appropriateness of the Ministry of Health's preference for providing non-financial incentives to community volunteers.
- **Sustainability:** There was a high level of community support for the SMAGs and ETS riders in the MAMaZ and MORE MAMaZ intervention sites, and a 'waiting list' of individuals who wanted to join them. Almost all volunteers indicated their intention to continue volunteering in future. The large group of volunteers in each community provided mutual support. This was positive for volunteer motivation and for sustainability.
- **Importance of traditional leaders:** Traditional leaders played a major role in helping to sustain the work of the SMAGs and associated community-based maternal and newborn health activities.

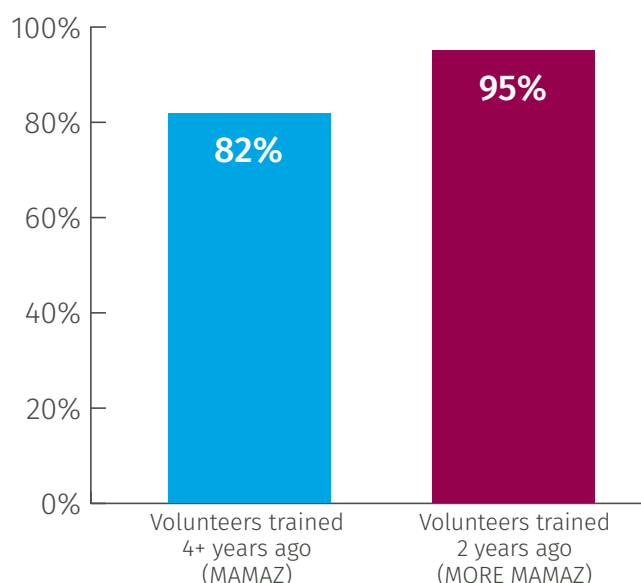


Figure 1: Volunteer retention rates in MAMaZ and MORE MAMaZ sites

## Policy Implications

- Training a large number of SMAG volunteers in every community (at least ten per community) increases the volunteers' reach and effectiveness, and helps to assure the sustainability of the volunteer effort. MAMaZ and MORE MAMaZ successfully used a cascade training approach to train a large number of volunteers.
- Community health volunteers need to be provided routine supportive supervision by District Health Teams. This support is essential for sustainability.
- Funds for the essential items that community health volunteers require in order to carry out their work need to be included in district health budgets. It is important not to conflate 'essential tools of the trade' with 'incentives'; these are different things.
- Volunteers aged 25 years old or less need to be recruited alongside older volunteers in SMAG recruitment processes. This will help to ensure that younger age groups are fully involved in SMAG activities.

The report of the volunteerism study undertaken by MORE MAMaZ can be obtained from **Miniratu Soyoola** (pdmoreamaz@gmail.com) or **Health Partners International** (info@healthpartners-int.co.uk).

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