

Virtual workshop

Learning from every loss: The role of parliamentarians in improving maternal health in Latin America and the Caribbean

22 June 2022

10:00 – 11:30 GMT-4 / 16:00 – 17:30 CEST (Geneva)

Registration link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpcuiugzguG9FvhGvQZ6jZHavcSYkAD_yl#/registration

Concept note

Background

Despite important global progress, about 295,000 women die during and following pregnancy and childbirth every year. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the estimated maternal mortality rate is 73 per 100,000 livebirths while most of these deaths are preventable. This average also hides inequalities between and within countries. In addition, any achievements made in the past two decades have been threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic which has disrupted reproductive and maternal health services and led to increased risks of poverty and inequalities for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Understanding exactly why each and every woman died in pregnancy, around the time of childbirth, or in the postnatal period, is a crucial first step towards preventing other women dying of the same causes. Surviving pregnancy and childbirth is not the only marker of successful maternal healthcare.

A better understanding of the circumstances of maternal deaths can help identify structural issues and other factors impacting women's well-being and rights. This is the goal of maternal death reporting and review (MDRR), a quality improvement intervention to reduce maternal mortality within a country's overall healthcare system. MDRR is an overlooked opportunity to accelerate maternal health improvement as the clock ticks down towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Parliamentarians have an important role to play within the growing global movement to incorporate MDRR into national legal frameworks. Where laws and regulations provide for maternal mortality reporting and review there is evidence of greater accountability grounded in international human rights standards; improvements in maternal health at the community level; and reallocation of resources to programmes that more effectively prevent maternal deaths.

Content and objectives

This virtual workshop will mobilize parliamentarians in Latin America and the Caribbean around a shared goal: to improve maternal health by enabling an MDRR system to prevent similar deaths occurring in the future. The workshop aims to:

- Strengthen participants' understanding of MDRR, its human rights dimensions, and the ways it can drive improvements in maternal health.
- Point to tangible actions that parliamentarians could take through legal, institutional and social accountability approaches to MDRR as part of efforts to improve maternal health, with emphasis on identifying the category of women who are most vulnerable.
- Stimulate dialogue between parliamentarians, government representatives and those working directly on maternal mortality reduction, to inform the World Health Organization's (WHO) and IPU's joint work on maternal health.

Target audience

The workshop is open to parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean. The target audience includes:

- Parliamentarians who are members of health committees and other committees dealing with maternal health matters
- Parliamentary staff supporting parliamentary work on maternal health.

The workshop will also be open to other interested parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in the Latin America and Caribbean region, and to government representatives.

The workshop will take place on the Zoom platform. The languages will be English, French and Spanish (simultaneous interpretation).

Follow up

The virtual workshop is part of the follow up process to the IPU resolution *Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health* which calls on parliaments to remove barriers preventing access to health services and to strengthen health systems to reduce maternal, newborn, child and adolescent mortality by strengthening sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health and nutrition services. The parliamentary practices and challenges shared during the workshop, which the IPU is organizing in jointly with the WHO and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), will help the IPU Advisory Group on Health take stock of different national experiences to identify lessons learnt and gaps in the implementation of the resolution.

As part of the ongoing collaboration between the IPU and WHO, the workshop constitutes the first step of a comprehensive programme to strengthen parliamentary engagement on maternal health, including the development of tools and resources for parliamentarians, and capacity development activities for parliaments in Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions.

Provisional programme

Opening

10:00 – 10:05 GMT-4 Welcome remarks

Session 1: Maternal mortality and the role of reporting

10:06– 10:10 The current state of maternal mortality and maternal mortality reporting and review (MDRR) in Latin America and the Caribbean

10:11-10:15 Advances and challenges in health-related laws in the Americas

10:16 – 10:23 Accountability and need for legislation

10:24 – 10:39 Q&A

Session 2: Parliamentary action to improve maternal health through maternal mortality reduction and maternal death reporting (MDRR)

10:40 – 11:05 Panel discussion

11:06 – 11:25 Interactive discussion with all participants

Closing

11:26 – 11:30 Closing remarks