ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify the factors leading to high maternal mortality in Karongi Rwanda. The study also examined the challenges faced by ministry of health surveillance team in implementing strategies that improve maternal health. A retrospective study design combining both qualitative and quantitative methods was used to make an in-depth investigation and analysis of the circumstances and events surrounding individual cases of maternal deaths. The road to death concept was followed in a quest to generate more information on the event preceding the death. Verbal autopsy and confidential inquiry techniques were utilized by reviewing all the maternal deaths cases that occurred in three hospitals of Kibuye, Kirinda and Mugonero between January 2009 and January 2010. The results of the study revealed that maternal death was caused by both the health services and socio-economic related factors which included hemorrhage, hypertension, malaria, diabetes, delay to seek medical care, cultural beliefs and poverty among others. The study also found out that the health teams that were supposed to implement strategies to reduce maternal death were faced with several challenges including lack of political commitment, inadequate financial support and lack of skilled personnel. This study concludes that maternal deaths are a consequence of a long and complex chain of events. Prevention of maternal deaths therefore requires far reaching social and economic changes beyond the premises of the health care delivery system. The government of Rwanda should invest in Girls’ education and improving the economic status of women. The ministry of health should ensure that contraceptives are readily available and accessible and encourage women to use them. Improving the road conditions and putting in place an effective and sustainable public transport system in rural areas is essential.