

Publication

Measures adopted by indigent mothers in Kilifi County to tackle maternal health challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic: a qualitative study

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Many sub-Saharan African countries have experienced various challenges that threaten the quality of health services offered to the population. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted access to healthcare services in many countries as they grappled with implementing measures to curb its spread. The consequences of COVID-19 have been catastrophic for maternal and newborn health. There is a dearth of information on expectant mothers' negotiation mechanisms to access maternal health services during COVID-19 in Kenya. This rapid qualitative study draws data from purposefully selected 15 mothers who were either pregnant or had newborn babies during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kilifi county in Kenya. Data were analyzed thematically and presented in a textual description. Women used the following alternatives to access maternal health: giving birth at the homes of traditional birth attendants (TBAs), substituting breastfeeding with locally available food supplements, relying on limited resources and neighbours for delivery and local savings and rotating credit associations. This study shows that urgent measures are needed to provide high quality maternal and child health services during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. These include but are not limited to developing special interventions for the pregnant women for any emergency and establishing trust between communities and individuals through the TBAs.

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