Sub-Saharan Africa continues to experience very high maternal and perinatal mortality rates, despite efforts of many. The evidence and tools for making childbirth safer exist, but challenges in implementing these at the point-of-care remain. Mpilo Central Hospital (MCH) is a large (~10,000 births/year) public hospital in Zimbabwe's second city, Bulawayo. Zimbabwe's maternal mortality ratio is reported to be very high, at about 1,000 per 100,000 live births.

In 2011, members of the PROMPT Maternity Foundation (UK), Zimbabwe Health Training Support (UK), and staff from MCH teamed up and implemented a multi-pronged quality improvement programme for maternity at MCH.

Problem: Limited access to Obstetric emergencies training, and lack of systems for evaluating success, level of uptake, or effectiveness of available training. As in other countries in the region, Obstetric emergencies courses in Zimbabwe are mostly held off-site, with limited access, high costs (conference rooms, travel, accommodation, 'per diems’ payments), all making for an unsustainable arrangement.

Solution: PROMPT course and the Maternity Dashboard. A PROMPT train-the-trainers course was run at MCH in November 2011, with 12 local staff trained to become PROMPT Trainers. Those MCH trainers have since run ten one-day courses for 203 other participants. 138/153 (90.2%) staff were trained by 12 months, 107 (78%) of whom had never had such training before. None received ‘per diems’ payments.

An Automated Maternity Dashboard was also implemented for use in monitoring ongoing progress, allowing staff to respond to problems promptly. The dashboard also helps point out areas that need greater emphasis during training.