Maternal death surveillance response (MDSR) means taking action to reduce avoidable maternal mortality by improving quality of care based on the identification, notification, quantification, and determination of causes of death and their avoidable contributing factors. MDSR builds on maternal death review (MDR), trends and causes of deaths at the community- and facility-level.

METHODOLOGY
A confidential enquiry of all reported Maternal deaths at the Midwives Service Scheme facilities (MSS) and the host communities in the three Northern zones of Nigeria from 1st July, 2011 to 31st December, 2011 using MDR tools.

RESULTS
The overall Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) was 181/100,000 live births. Out of the 141 confirmed maternal deaths, 53.6% were unbooked and 38.2% were grand multiparous women. Most of these women were married (99.3%), muslims (95.3%), with no formal education (82.5%) and were full time house wifes (95.0%). Direct obstetric complications accounted for 80.9% of the deaths with Obstetric haemorrhage and Eclampsia accounting for 2/3rd of these deaths. The still birth rate was 18/1000 total deliveries. Fifty percent of the deliveries were conducted by Skilled Birth Attendants. Postpartum deaths (70%), Home deliveries (55.4%), Health facility deaths (51.8%) and Patient factors (87.2%) were the main underlying factors.

DISCUSSION
The avoidable factors for maternal deaths in Northern Nigeria were: Low socioeconomic status, home delivery, patient and community factors.

CONCLUSION
Effective contraception, detection of danger signs, hospital delivery and prompt quality Emergency obstetric care are the key interventions to reduce maternal mortality in Northern Nigeria.