

# A hospital-wide approach to assessing quality of care in humanitarian hospitals in South Sudan



Mullahzada A<sup>1,2</sup>, Reijbroek K<sup>2</sup>, Essink D<sup>2</sup>, Tesfay B<sup>3</sup>, Broerse J<sup>2</sup>, Velivela K<sup>4</sup>, Hussain S<sup>1</sup>, Cross S<sup>1</sup>, Singh J<sup>5</sup>, Getahun T<sup>6</sup>, Kuony W<sup>6</sup>, Harris L<sup>6</sup>, Duku S<sup>5</sup>, Ritmeijer K<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Médecins sans Frontières, Operational Centre Amsterdam, Plantage Middenlaan 14, 1018 DD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. <sup>2</sup>Athena Institute, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. <sup>3</sup>Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool, United Kingdom. <sup>4</sup>Médecins sans Frontières, Operational Centre Amsterdam, Nairobi, Kenya. <sup>5</sup>Médecins sans Frontières, Operational Centre Amsterdam, Lankien, Republic of South Sudan. <sup>6</sup>Médecins sans Frontières, Operational Centre Amsterdam, Bentiu, Republic of South Sudan

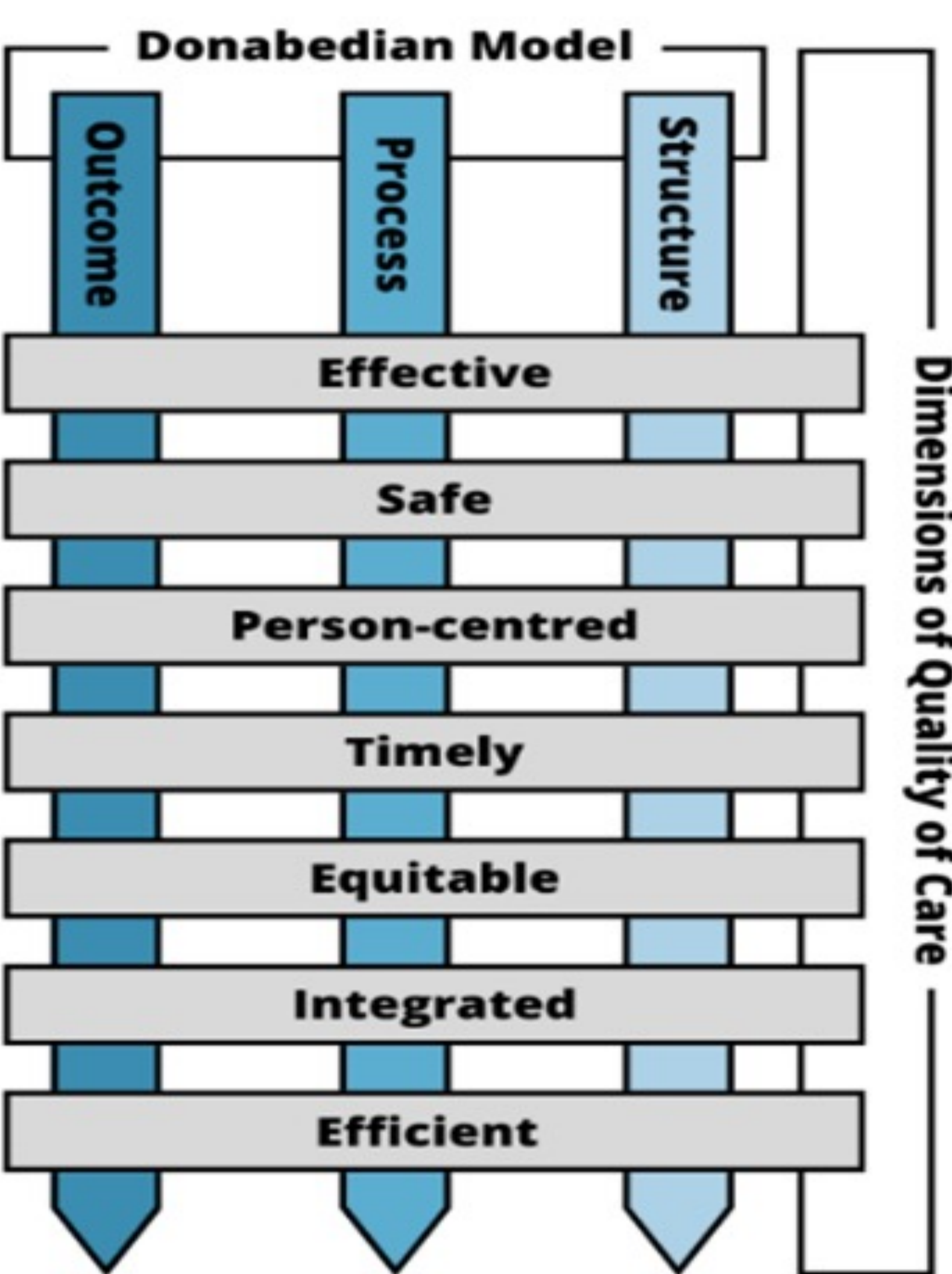
## Background

Fragile and conflict-affected settings present unique challenges in delivering quality healthcare and sustaining quality improvement, where systemic gaps, resource limitations, and contextual barriers affect patient outcomes. This study provides a holistic assessment of the quality of care (QoC) in two Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospitals in South Sudan, Bentiu and Lankien.

Patients and caretakers in both hospitals expressed high satisfaction with the quality of care, communication, and respect received during their stay in the hospital

## Method

A multi-method analysis of 2019–2022 data combined 116 indicators (from 10,000+ initially), mapped to WHO's seven quality dimensions and Donabedian domains, with surveys capturing perceived quality from patients, caretakers, and staff.



To drive meaningful quality improvement, these hospitals must reduce data overload, streamline routine monitoring processes, and ensure balanced measurement across structure, process, and outcome indicators.

## Conclusions

Too much data, too little meaning, simplifying reporting and balancing indicators across all dimensions of quality is essential for actionable improvements.

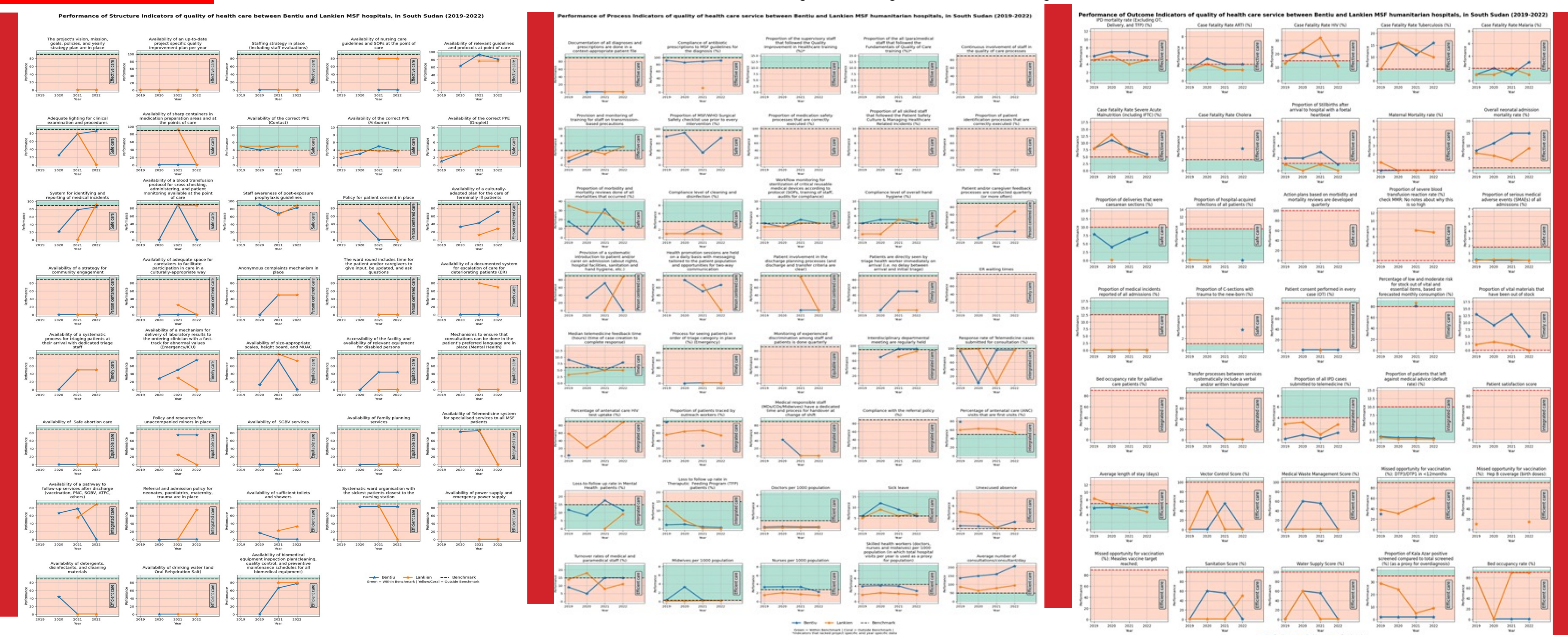
Routine quality monitoring must include the voices and experiences of patients, caretakers, and staff to reflect the lived reality of care provided.

## Results Patients and Caretakers

	Percentage of respondents that positively reacted to the statement		
	Bentiu n	Lankien n	p-value
<b>Introduction and Orientation</b>			
A member of staff explained the hospital layout	61%	53%	0.2
Health facilities were kept clean	99%	95%	0.12
It was easy to identify hospital staff	73%	89%	0.002
<b>Diagnosis and Treatment</b>			
You know your or your child's diagnosis	83%	42%	<0.001
You are informed about the possible outcomes of the condition	80%	37%	<0.001
You understand the treatments prescribed	86%	46%	<0.001
You are involved in decisions about treatment	79%	35%	<0.001
You were informed before referral or transfer	99%	47%	<0.001
Hospital staff explained medication to you	96%	60%	<0.001
During the hospital stay you received conflicting information	41%	68%	<0.001
<b>Communication</b>			
Hospital staff communicated in a language you understand	100%	NA	NA
The hospital staff explained medical information in a way you could understand	95%	87%	0.056
<b>Dignity and Respect</b>			
The hospital staff carefully listened to you	97%	86%	0.003
The hospital staff treated you with courtesy and respect	77%	88%	0.032
You felt safe communicating with the hospital staff	95%	84%	0.004
<b>Care Satisfaction</b>			
Nursing care satisfaction	91%	92%	0.7
Doctors care satisfaction	97%	93%	0.15
<b>Discharge and Recommendation</b>			
You understand responsibilities for managing your health	92%	89%	0.5
You or your child's health problem is sufficiently addressed	90%	84%	0.2
Likelihood of recommending the hospital to family or friends	97%	96%	0.2

## Result

Despite extensive data, poor data quality limits interpretation and utility for quality improvement. data collection is increased burden on field staff without generating actionable insights.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the hospital staff, patients, and caretakers in Bentiu and Lankien for their participation and valuable insights. Special thanks to Kirsten and Berhe for their contributions to data collection, analysis, and visualization of the results.

- Although higher patient satisfaction and better communication in Bentiu, both hospitals faced gaps in staff training and neonatal mortality remained a concern, especially in Bentiu.
- Out of 116 indicators, only around 45 met benchmark targets, while 12 had no reported data, mainly in areas like staffing, SGBV, discrimination monitoring, and vaccination coverage.
- Bentiu showed stronger performance in the dimensions of safety, effectiveness, and person centredness (especially communication and care planning), while Lankien performed better on equity-related indicators such as disability-friendly facilities

