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Addressing gender norms and inequalities to improve maternal and child health: Describing and building on the evidence base for gender-integrated interventions

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Gender and Health

- Gender Dynamics
 - Norms: socially accepted behaviors, attitudes, relationship patterns
 - Inequalities: differential access to and control over resources, including health services
- Influence of gender dynamics on health
 - Limited decision making power within household contributes to reduced use of health services
 - Women's responsibility for household chores contribute to reduced time for breastfeeding and other health-promoting behaviors
 - Intimate partner violence increases risk for pregnancy complications, pre-term birth, low birthweight

Addressing Gender Dynamics

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Gender – Integrated Interventions:

- * IEC for men and women, encourage male support
- * Couples intervention, communication & decision making
- * Girl/Women's empowerment

Gender Outcomes:

- * Increased school attendance
- * Joint and equitable decision-making and communication
- * Men's support of ANC and PMTCT

Relevant Behavioral Outcomes:

- * Increased age of marriage and first childbirth
- * Exclusive Breastfeeding
- * Uptake of ANC and PMTCT

Improved Maternal & Child Health

GENDER EQUALITY CONTINUUM

Ignores:

- the set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements and obligations associated with being female and male
- dynamics between and among men and women

Gender Blind



Gender Aware

- Examines and addresses these gender considerations and adopts an approach along the continuum

Exploitative

Reinforces or takes advantage of gender inequalities and stereotypes

Accommodating

Works around existing gender differences and inequalities

Transformative

- Fosters critical examination of gender norms* and dynamics
- Strengthens or creates systems* that support gender equality
- Strengthens or creates equitable gender norms and dynamics
- Changes inequitable gender norms and dynamics

Goal:
Gender Equality for better development outcomes

*norms encompass attitudes and practices

*systems consist of a set of interacting structures, practices, beliefs and relations that define what it means to be male or female

Literature Review: Methods

- Searched published and grey literature for SBCC interventions
 - Search terms
 - High impact practices: behaviors related to healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy, maternal health (e.g., ANC, pregnancy plan), and child health (e.g., PMTCT, breastfeeding immunization)
 - Gender Dynamics: e.g., partner, joint decision making, women's empowerment, and gender inequitable norms
- Reviewed abstracts and papers for relevant interventions
 - Behavioral outcome
 - Moderate to rigorous evaluation design
 - Pre- and post-test intervention and comparison group
 - Multivariate analyses with other quasi-experimental designs
- Grouped interventions by approach (accommodating or transformative) and by target population (age, sex)

Gender-Accommodating Interventions

Gender-accommodating interventions (n=8)

- Behavioral outcomes
 - FP use (n=3),
 - ANC (n=4),
 - Breastfeeding (n=1)
- Women and men's separate (3) or joint couples counseling (5) or education in relation to:
 - Family planning
 - Maternal health/antenatal care
- Mostly clinic-based

Gender-Transformative Interventions

Gender- transformative, adolescents (n=5)

- Multi-component interventions
 - Address literacy, education, life skills and/or health information (n=3)
 - Education, counseling, outreach (adolescents, husbands, families), support groups (n=2)
- Behavioral outcomes
 - Delayed marriage & FP use among married adolescents (n=3)
 - ANC use, pregnancy behaviors & early child health (n=2)



Photo by: ndrani Kashyap, Jhpiego

Gender-Transformative Interventions

Older women (meta analysis +I)

- Participatory approaches: Groups meet to identify & prioritize problems; plan, implement and assess action
- Behavioral outcomes
 - ANC, pregnancy behaviors, maternal and child mortality
 - Child stunting (n=1)



Photo by: Karen Kasmauski, MCSP

Gender-Transformative Interventions

Men or couples (n=4)

- Behavioral outcomes: FP use
- Individual or group meetings/workshops with men alone or men, women and couples, with adult learning activities, discussions, skills building to increase family planning use.



Gender-Transformative Interventions

Gender-transformative, broader community (n=3)

- Mass media (male support for & communication about FP) (n=2)
- Multi-component intervention increased access to services (community nursing) and community mobilization (n=1)
- Behavioral outcomes
 - FP (n=2)
 - FP,ANC, child health (e.g., immunization)



Summary of the Evidence

- **Positive findings:**
 - Delayed age at marriage
 - Increased use of family planning (most common)
 - Reduce child stunting
 - Women's participatory action groups: reduced maternal and neonatal mortality (strongest effects)
- Gender accommodating and transformative interventions with men show promise, but may need more time
- **Inconsistency in findings across studies**
 - Some null effects, e.g., related to access to services such as facility delivery or attended delivery, which families have less control over

Research Recommendations

- More systematic evaluations overall and to:
 - Understand conditions under which interventions can be most successful
 - Interventions that can be brought to scale
 - Specific aspects of interventions that work
- Need for a common causal pathway linking gender dynamics and health behaviors
 - Requires identifying critical gender norms/inequalities
 - Need consistency in measuring gender dynamics
- GBV interventions did not measure impact on RMNCH
- RCTs are not always the answer

Resources

Acting on the Call

http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/USAID_ActingOnTheCall_2014.pdf

Kraft JM, Wilkins KG, Morales GJ, Widyono M, Middlestadt SE. An evidence review of gender-integrated interventions in reproductive and maternal-child health. *Journal of Health Communication*, 2014 19:122-141.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10810730.2014.918216>

Note: This includes supplemental material (i.e., detailed review form and detailed table summarizing interventions).

USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy

<http://www.usaid.gov/documents/1865/gender-equality-and-female-empowerment-policy>

United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence Globally

<http://www.usaid.gov/gbv>

Interagency Gender Working Group

www.igwg.org