

"Most Men Pretend to be Busy..." The Struggle for Male-Partner Involvement in Maternal and Child Health in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda

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Outline

- Background
- Methodology
- Findings
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- Key references



Background

- Northern Uganda is recovering from a brutal civil war that claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions.
- Maternal health is deplorable with a fertility rate of 6.3 and median age at first birth of 17.8 years.
- The prevalence of HIV/AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence is very high in the region.

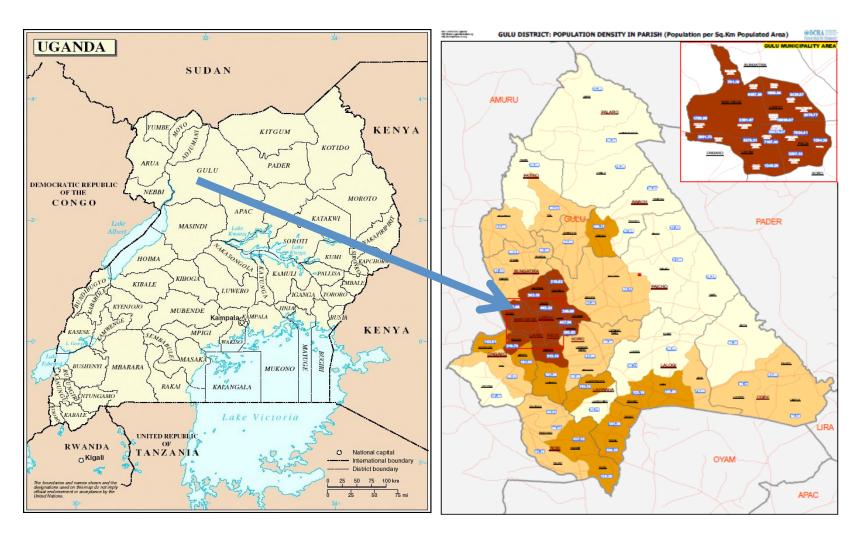
Background (Cont.)

- MI in maternal and child health has been advocated as a strategy to improve MCH.
- This study aims to document the barriers to effective MI in MCH and strategies adopted by local health authourities to address the situation.



Methodology

Setting: Map of Gulu



Methods and participants

- Qualitative exploratory study utilizing semistructured in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).
- Participants: local health providers and staff of NGOs working in the domain of MCH in Northern Uganda.
- Data was managed in Nvivo and analysed using the framework approach.

Results

 A total of 22 IDIs and 2 FGDs, involving 35 participants were conducted.



Decisions are made around the communal drinking pot.

Results: Main barriers

- Lack of time/ long waiting time to access services;
- Strong cultural norms and beliefs;
- Historic lack of policies and programmes deliberately targeting MI in MCH;
- Poor support for policies and programs focused on male involvement in maternal health

Barriers to effective MI: Quotes

Lack of time

"What we have seen is that they always say they don't have time. They are always in the offices looking for bread. So they don't have the time to go to the hospital" NGO-Health Provider, FGD

Historic lack of policies and programmes deliberately targeting MI in MCH

"Initially, most of the programmes linked to in maternal and reproductive health were so focused on women and that derailed and affected the attitude of men and their involvement" NGO-Policy maker, FGD

Results: Main barriers

- Poor engagement/ interaction with men who accompany their spouses to the facility/ nonavailability of malefriendly services;
- Perceived difficulty in engaging men; and
- Financial barriers.

Non-availability of malefriendly services during couple visits

"Sometimes the men wonder
'what they have come to do at
the facility' when they
accompany their wives for
antenatal. We have not been
men-friendly when we are
building our health facilities"
LHP-Policy maker, IDI

Strategies for improving male involvement in MCH



Results: Strategies

- Involving local political and cultural leaders to promote the campaign
- Instituting regulations that oblige men to accompany their spouses for some pregnancyrelated services at the facility
- Increasing funding for programs focused on men at the facility
- Prioritizing the delivery of maternal services to women who are accompanied by their spouses to the facility
- Forming all-male support groups for promoting maternal health

 Involving local political and cultural leaders to promote the campaign

"...what we are in for now is to advocate to all key public stakeholders to be aware of the need for MI and also spread the same information to the grassroots because people listen to them. If the president says 'men you respect your women and move with them to the hospitals' ..., they listen to them, because they vote for them. So we are trying all avenues to get the politicians, opinion leaders and cultural leaders to accept this and promote it" NGO-Policy maker, FGD

Increase more programmes focused on men

"...we need to change our programming strategies to ensure that MI is fifty-fifty with the women because the issues affect both of them" NGO-Policy maker, FGD

Conclusion & Recommendations

- Poor MI in MCH remains a major challenge to improving in Northern Uganda
- Local authorities must invest more resources into MI-related activities and develop more innovative approaches to effectively engaging men
- Potential initiatives must equally cater for the health needs of the men

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