

Designing a FP/FAM Group Facilitated Learning Model in Uganda: Formative Research Findings

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Fertility Awareness
for Community
Transformation

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Fertility Awareness
for Community
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Goal:

To increase use of family planning by improving fertility awareness and expanding access to fertility awareness-based methods (FAM)

Partners:



Uganda Statistics

	National	Northern Region
Total Fertility Rate	6.2	6.3
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (married women)	30%	23%
Discontinuation Rate	43%	
Unmet Need (married women)	47%	43%
Ability to Make Decisions on Own Healthcare (married women)	23%	
Correct Knowledge of Fertile Days (women)	14%	

Group Facilitated Learning

Research Questions:

- Does group learning result in increased fertility awareness and FP use, including FAM?
- Can FAM be successfully offered by trained facilitators without need for individual counseling?

Primary Audiences

- Youth (married/unmarried)
- Post-partum women and their partners
- Couples wishing to delay/space births

Context/Program Platform

Save the Children's Youth Initiative for Employment and Sustainable Livelihood Development (YIELD) in Gulu

Group Facilitated Learning Model

Involves brief, interactive lessons to teach community members to:

- Correctly assess pregnancy risk; and
- Learn accurate information about family planning methods

If interested, group members are:

- Referred for FP methods at different service delivery points; or
- Can learn from their facilitator in their community groups how to use a FAM of their choice – Standard Days Method, TwoDay Method, or Lactational Amenorrhea Method.

Formative Research Study Design

ACHOLI SUB-REGION		
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (with YEILD Members, 6-8 people)	Bungatira Sub-County	Anaka Sub-County
Older women (25-45)	3	3
Younger women (age 18-24, or emancipated adults (married or mothers) age 15-17)	3	3
Older men (25-50)	2	2
Younger men (age 18-24, or emancipated adults (married) age 15-17)	2	2
TOTAL	10	10
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS		
Group Facilitators (YEILD)	2	2
Community leaders	2	2
Family Planning Providers	2	2
TOTAL	6	6

Formative Research Questions

- What do people know about Family Planning (FP)?
- How acceptable is FP?
- What are the barriers and facilitators to FP use?
- How do people communicate about FP?
- What do people know and think about Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)?
- How interested are people in the Group Teaching of FAM?

RESULTS

Formative Research - Gulu



Family Planning

Knowledge and Acceptability

- Family planning is strongly associated with child-spacing

“Family planning means how to space children so that in future you know how to plan, you should not have very many children.” (Older Man)
- Positive attitudes toward child-spacing across participants (related to economic considerations)

“To me, family planning is a way of spacing birth so that you give birth to few children. Because if they (the children) are many, then feeding and paying school fees become a problem. That is my opinion.” (Older Woman)

“According to me and people in this area...family planning is good. And the first ones who space children sow small, but reap much. One who doesn't, sows much but the weakness of his family is much.” (Community Leader)

Family Planning

Knowledge and Acceptability

- Hormonal methods discussed: injectable (most common), implants, and pills
 - Some support among women for hormonal methods(allows them to save money, benefits the health of the mother and family)
 - Concerns among men and women over side-effects for women and children
 - Women often seek hormonal contraception without the support or knowledge of husband

Family Planning

Knowledge and Acceptability

“I also heard about implant, which is often inserted in the arm of women. It takes about three to ten years depending on what you have chosen. So this gives ample time for the woman to relax with her husband and provide adequately for her children.” (Younger Woman)

“I witnessed a baby to one of the women who was using family planning; she gave birth to a baby who was so weak. I also saw this with my brother`s wife. She gave birth to a baby, but the baby died. After getting pregnant again, she did not use family planning and the baby was normal.” (Older man)

“When you are going for family planning, you should go without the notice of your husband because when he gets to know, he will not allow. So most people go for family planning without the notice of their husbands. That is what I have done.” (Older Woman)

Family Planning

Knowledge and Acceptability

- Natural methods discussed less frequently: abstinence, withdrawal, MoonBeads, breastfeeding
 - Men seem to appreciate these methods

“If a man is patient, then he can respect (his wife) even for six months. I should follow my wife`s advice because I saw the effect of pill plan and she can have heavy blood flow or others can become so small (lose weight).” (Older man)
 - Both men and women express concern over men’s ability to maintain abstinence

“When he (husband) comes home drunk on the day I am supposed to count the risk days and he fails to understand...you know, alcohol can control even a teacher or president. He (the husband) might fail to understand and forcefully we would have to have sex...This is its bad side.” (Older woman)

Family Planning Barriers

- Male opposition

"If I hear about family planning, I really get a sudden shock...because I will say, 'Oh my mother, trouble has started!' ...I would like to start it this way, as I see that some demerits are there." (Younger man)

- Cultural pressure to have large families

"I always tell my younger brothers and sisters that, for my case, I need to have four children. During the conversation, others say they need five, six..." (Younger Man)

- Men's avoidance of dowry

"They say that the (relatives) of my wife will constantly ask you for dowry, so what the man does is to constantly keep the woman pregnant so that when they find her pregnant, they cannot ask for dowry anymore, because it's culture. So they do that to dodge paying the dowry, that's why family planning is hard." (Younger Man)

- Gaps in service provision, stock-outs, lack of method selection, staffing shortage

"Sometimes we also experience stock outs...and in the process of us completing the restocking process, they will have ended up getting pregnant. And then, we are understaffed...some end up going back without accessing the service." (Family Planning Provider)

Family Planning Facilitators

- Some mutual understanding and agreement among couples reported

“When I hear about family planning, I become happy because we shall be discussing issues with my wife on how we should plan to get our children, how we should protect our children so that they get food, how we should pay our children in school so that they go ahead with studies and how we should look for money to maintain our home for future.” (Older man)

- Lack of user fees for family planning enables access among many women

“Even if it’s far, if they (women) hear that it (family planning) is free of charge they can carry themselves on a bicycle. Especially nowadays, people’s eyes have opened especially in the field of producing children.” (Younger man)

Family Planning Communication (Couples)

- Couple communication is rare, and it is expected that women will instigate conversations
- Women desire communication, but skeptical that husbands will support their family planning desires
- **Women fear violence when talking about family planning**

“The first one (conversation) depends on the understanding of the man. Some men are rude, while others are calm. So we women find it difficult, sometimes you may also say to him in a humble way, but he will reply with violence. So that makes is difficult to women for real.” (Younger woman)

Standard Days Method (SDM): Knowledge

- While there is some support among men and women for fertility awareness methods, few have heard of calendar methods, Moon Beads.

“I have heard. People say you count the beads to determine your periods, but I do not know.” (Young Woman)

- Confusion over “safe/unsafe” days

“First of all, natural family planning method is where a man will not have sex with a woman if she is in her periods. So when you don’t have sex during period, your wife will not conceive, so this is one of the methods since we shall not be using the artificial methods.” (Younger Woman)

- Women tended to correctly identify “how” to manage fertile days, such as through use of condoms or abstinence, but because safe and unsafe days are often misinterpreted, there is a high chance that they will not be correctly managed.

Standard Days Method (SDM): Facilitators and Barriers

- **Facilitators:**
 - Improved couple communication
 - The method does not have side effects
 - It is no/low cost
 - One would not have to return regularly to a facility to use the method
- **Barriers:**
 - Women's inability to negotiate sex
 - Fear that men will think that a woman is unfaithful when wanting to abstain from sex
 - Need for a high level agreement among couples
 - Fear that husband might cheat by moving the beads without wife's knowledge

Teaching Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)

- Groups were highly interested in learning about FAM, especially SDM and LAM.

“I also say that we are interested in all the three methods, for us to learn and apply it in our lives. Everyone will then understand and choose the most appropriate method for themselves.” (Young woman)

- Women and men believe that the group members will be interested in learning these methods.

“I believe that people will have the desire to understand those things (FAM) into details and begin to use them appropriately.” (Younger men)

- Many felt that these methods have a benefit because of the lack of side effects. Members suggested that both males and females should be taught together.

Conclusion

Family Planning Facilitators

- Desire for healthy families in light of economic considerations
- Some mutual understanding and agreement to use family planning among couples
- Lack of user fees for family planning enables access among many women
- Women often talk with one another and the information diffuses through the community. Women meet at: water points, markets, churches, VSLA and hospitals.

Family Planning Barriers

- **Male opposition.** Opposition to family planning
- **Side Effects.** Concerns with side effects of hormonal methods
- **Gaps in service provision.** Stock outs, lack of method selection, staffing shortage
- **Women's inability to negotiate sex.** Fear that men will think that a woman is unfaithful when wanting to abstain from sex
- **FP communication.** Currently limited in community and among couples

SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT CYCLE



