PROMOTING MODERN BIRTH SPACING METHODS THROUGH INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AGENTS

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Background

In Somaliland:

- Unmet need for contraception is 29%
- Total fertility rate is 5.9
- Modern contraceptive prevalence rate is 4.6%

Challenges to family planning uptake:

- Poverty
- Shortage of qualified health workers
- Religious and cultural influences
- Lack of female decision making power over their own health
Program Intervention

In 2010, PSI/Somaliland launched a reproductive health education program targeting women of reproductive age.

The program is designed to:

- Increase women’s reproductive health knowledge
- Provide them a safe place to share information and experiences
- Empower women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health
- Promote behaviors such as facility delivery, antenatal care attendance, and use of birth spacing
Methodology

- The program is conducted in the three main urban towns of Somaliland inside or outside health centers.
- In one week, women attend 4 consecutive sessions, which cover:
  - Antenatal care (ANC)
  - Safe delivery
  - Post natal care (PNC)
  - Infant and young child feeding (IYCF)
  - Modern birth spacing (MBS)
- Vouchers for ANC, laboratory test and safe delivery are given if the services are not provided for free.
- An informational booklet is distributed to all participants.
Methodology

- 8 female Interpersonal Communication (IPC) agents were selected and trained by PSI/Somaliland
- IPC agents have a strong link with the community through community organizers
- IPC agents were involved in the development of information, education and communication (IEC) materials
- IPC agents use counseling cards to convey the curriculum
- For MBS only, audio sessions are conducted by a well known and respected Somali doctor
RESULTS
Results July 2010-August 2011

- 2,379 sessions were conducted
- 5,963 women aged 16-49 were reached, including:
  - 3,438 pregnant women
  - 1,804 lactating mothers
  - 721 non-pregnant non-lactating women
- Just 28 women (.05%) dropped out
Behavioral outcomes for pregnant mothers

Facility Delivery
- Delivered in a health facility: 81%
- Did not deliver in a health facility: 19%

% of pregnant women attending ANC visits
- 1st visit: 92.2%
- 2nd visit: 39.2%
Lessons learnt and next steps

- High retention rate for sessions demonstrates a felt need for reproductive health information among Somali women.
- IPC sessions are an effective channel both to educate women and learn more about challenges and barriers they face.
- Community organizers play a vital role in mobilizing women at community level and making follow up.
- Male involvement in reproductive health is very limited; there is a need to expand the program to include men.