

Effect of Peer Counselling through Mother-to-Mother and Father-to-Father Support Groups

Background

Recommended Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices could contribute significantly in reducing childhood malnutrition and improving child survival ¹. Yet only 1 in 10 Somali children are appropriately fed with the WHO/UNICEF recommended combination of breast milk and complementary solid foods at the age of one ². According to the Lancet Series on Child Survival, IYCF ranks among the most effective interventions to improve child nutrition/health and reduce child mortality. As part of CHASP project, SCI piloted a community-based father to father (F2F) and mother to mother (M2M) support groups in three districts (Carmo, Cadaado and Kismayo). The study assessed the impact of IYCF training on knowledge, attitude and practices among mothers and fathers who attended M2M and F2F support group in the three districts in Somalia.

Methodology

The study followed a quasi-experimental approach. The study was conducted in three targeted districts supported by CHASP. Kismayo was selected to receive M2M and F2F support groups in different segment (six interventions and five controls) in one large refugee camp. Cadaado received M2M support group only in three villages while Carmo received F2F groups only in four villages. To enhance the effect of intervention a control groups were selected in Cadaado and Carmo districts. The pilot study had nine M2M and nine F2F support groups and seven control segments. The study was conducted for three months (September-November 2018) with standard 12 IYCF sessions. Two-wave panel data was collected among intervention and control groups among 250 caregivers. The study utilizes difference in difference odds ratio to assess effects.

Figure 1: Interventions in the selected districts

Study sample		
Carmo	Cadaado	Kismayo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 F2F • 4 Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 M2M • 3 Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 M2M • 5 F2F

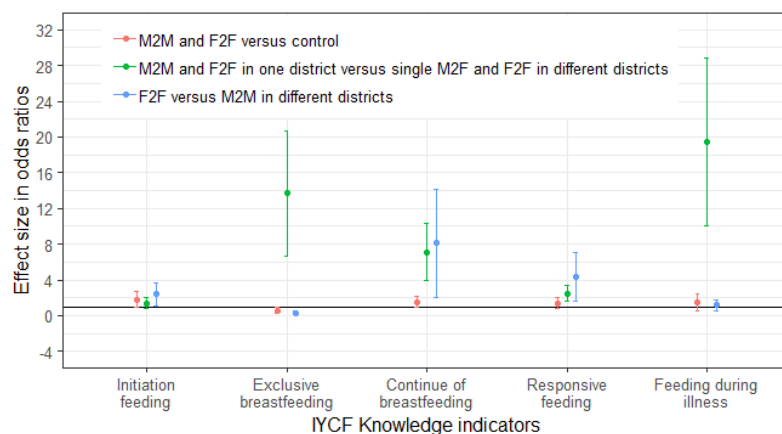
Findings

IYCF Knowledge

In Kismayo, where both M2M and F2F were conducted in one village/refugee camp the combined interventions led to improved knowledge in four of the five messages in child nutrition i.e. exclusive breast feeding, continuous breastfeeding, responsive feeding and feeding during illnesses. However separate intervention i.e. M2M or F2F in separate villages did well in remembering the initial breastfeeding knowledge though it was not statistically significant.

When we compared the effect of M2M vs F2F in Cadaado and Carmo only (to eliminate contamination) the fathers had better understanding on continuous breast feeding and responsive feeding after three months session on IYCF training.

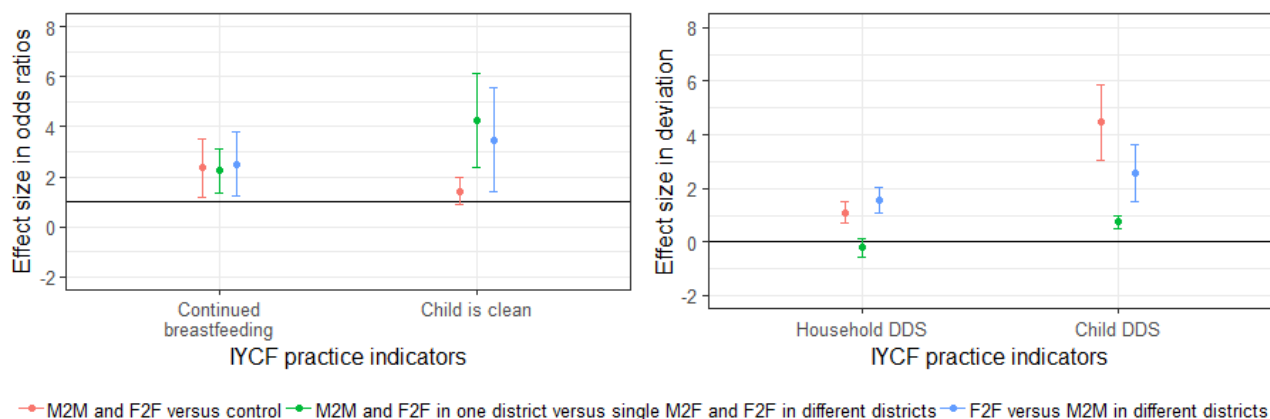
Figure 2: M2M & F2F Sessions on IYCF Knowledge



IYCF Practices

We assessed the effect on intervention on practices on dietary feeding among household members and hygiene as well. It was demonstrated that on the combined intervention area, mothers and fathers were practicing on continuous breastfeeding and child cleanliness practices. In the districts where we had M2M or F2F the fathers did well in household and child diverse dietary feeding, continuous breast feeding and child cleanliness. Overall the intervention had no effects recorded on likelihood of seeking treatment among the M2M & or F2F group.

Figure 3: M2M and F2F Sessions on IYCF Practices



We analyzed further to see the effect of combined intervention in Kismayo at baseline and end line on dietary diversity feeding practices among children. Based on different level of social economic status the mothers and fathers in Kismayo improved in child dietary diversity even though they were in the category of low social economic status and the improvement in dietary diversity doubled in upper social economic status. The quantitative result were at per with qualitative interview where the participants gave finances as one of constrains to practice dietary diversity among the Somali population.

Table 1: M2M and F2F on child dietary feeding with SES

	Combined intervention vs single			
	Other districts		Kismayo	
SES_cat	Baseline	End line	Baseline	End line
Low SES	3.81	3.83	4.05	5.67
Middle SES	4.91	5.33	4.55	5.65
Upper SES	3.65	5.83	2.88	5.23

Limitation of the study: The study was conducted over three month, therefore due to short duration of time the nutritional status of the caregiver and children could not be deduced.

Discussion

Overall both the M2M and/or F2F interventions showed improvement on IYCF knowledge and practices. In Kismayo where we had both interventions i.e M2M and F2F introduced, the IYCF knowledge and practices improved more than when only one intervention i.e. F2F or M2M was introduced. This is attributable due to different role that mother and father play in the household i.e. decision maker and caregiver respectively. The assumption are the parents are discussing with their respective gender group and partners whenever they meet in social gathering like weddings, the markets or family meetings. This was in line with similar study that has been in Bangladesh in 2018, stated that, more than a third of their participants received IYCF information from their neighbor³. The fathers were very excited to be involved in the IYCF training which was contrary to the routine which mothers only received the training occasionally.

References:

1. UNICEF (2003) Global strategy for infant and young child feeding. Switzerland: WHO. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/9241562218/en/index.htmlDdsda>.
2. UNICEF. Three in ten mothers in Somalia exclusively breastfeed for the first six months. <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/three-ten-mothers-somalia-exclusively-breastfeed-first-six-months>. Aug 2017
3. Hoddinott, J., et al. (2017). "Behavior change communication activities improve infant and young child nutrition knowledge and practice of neighboring non-participants in a cluster-randomized trial in rural Bangladesh." PLoS one 12(6): e0179866

In conclusion, combined M2M & F2F sessions in one setting for both mothers and fathers improve IYCF knowledge and practices. There is a need for scaling up combined M2M and F2F intervention as a platform to improve infant and young child feeding knowledge, attitude and practices in one settings due to different roles played by both parents. To assess the impact of the intervention on nutritional status the study need to be assessed for longer than 3 months.