Determinants of self-reported IUD use among women of reproductive age in Laos

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significance/background

Laos has among the lowest contraceptive prevalence rates (CPR) in Southeast Asia, at 49.8% (Lao Social Indicator Survey, 2012). Due to low availability of contraceptives and a limited range of contraceptive choices, unmet need for family planning is high, affecting 19.9% of all currently married women of reproductive age (WRA) (ibid). Laos also has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios (MMR) in the region, estimated at 357 per 100,000 live births, the equivalent of nearly 12 women dying each week (ibid). Under the 2013-2015 Women’s Health Project (WHP), PSI/Laos works to ensure that all Laos women have access to affordable family planning services and are equipped with the information they need to make informed contraceptive choices. PSI/Laos provides intensive technical assistance to build the capacity of public sector providers to enable them to offer voluntary IUD insertion services, while also using Interpersonal Communication (IPC) agents to generate informed demand for family planning methods through village-level outreach. Through the WHP, PSI/Laos aims to raise the percentage of WRA using IUDs from 1.6% in 2011 to 4.0% by the end of 2015.

methodology

Cross-sectional studies of WRA were conducted in 2011 and 2014 in Vientiane Province and Champasak Province, which receive PSI-supported IPC as well as IUD training for staff in public health facilities at all levels, as well as in Khammouan and Luang Prabang, two provinces where PSI’s activities only extend to the provincial capitals. A multi-stage, systematic random sampling design was applied, which provided design level representation of a sample size of 481 respondents in the baseline study and 824 respondents in the follow-up study. Data was collected through in-person interviews of WRA aged 15-49 years.

Information on use of contraceptive methods and perceptions of IUDs was collected using a structured questionnaire. All analysis was performed in SPSS. Bi-variate and multi-variate logistic regression analyses were applied to compare the findings of self-reported IUD use between baselines and follow-up, examine key determinants of IUD use, and explore associations between program exposure and IUD use.

results & key findings

There was a significant increase in self-reported IUD use from 2.8% (95% CI: 0.7, 4.8) in the baseline study to 6.4% (95% CI: 4.9, 8.8) in the follow-up study.

Notably, the multiple logistic regression analysis suggests that women who held positive perceptions about IUDs had a significantly higher likelihood of using IUDs themselves. For example, women were more likely to be IUD users if they believed the IUD was easy to obtain, that it was an effective contraceptive method for them personally, and that it was an economical form of contraception. The study also revealed that holding negative beliefs about IUD side effects, outcomes, or the IUD insertion process was associated with a lower rate of IUD use.

In addition, having at least one family member who had ever used an IUD was strongly correlated with self-reported IUD use. The odds of having an IUD were 472.5 times higher among WRA who reported having at least one family member who had ever used an IUD than among WRA who had no family members who had ever used an IUD (OR 472.519, 95% CI: 175.311, 1273.589).

The survey also found that several misconceptions about IUDs were prevalent among WRA. For example, 37% of those surveyed believed IUDs were not appropriate for breastfeeding women. Also, nearly half of women surveyed believed the IUD causes mood changes, and 53% of women reported either slight or strong agreement that the IUD could fall out during hard physical labor.

hypothesis/ main question

PSI/Laos conducted this survey to monitor the progress of the WHP and to contribute to existing knowledge about WRA’s use, perceptions, attitudes, and awareness of FP methods, particularly IUDs. Data was compared to a baseline Tracking Results Continuously (TRaC) survey from 2011.

The main objectives of this survey were to:
• Compare rates of IUD use among the target population in 2011 to those in 2014
• Determine perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge about IUDs among the target population
• Identify determinants of use of modern contraceptive methods, particularly the IUD

knowledge contribution

The study revealed that IUD uptake has increased significantly since 2011 in the four provinces in Laos included in this survey. Given that very little data exists on determinants of IUD use among WRA in Laos, this study fills a substantial gap. The results suggest that IPC outreach combined with capacity building on IUD service provision for public sector providers is an effective way to increase the number of women using IUDs in Laos and offer evidence for continued scaling up of these activities. Additionally, the study has generated findings on women’s misconceptions about IUDs, self-efficacy in making decisions on reproduction, and reasons for switching from one contraceptive to another. Such information will be useful for improving program activities, such as the content of family planning counseling, in current WHP activities as well as across other family planning programs in Laos.