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Exploring the potentials of the Key Influencers of a Somali Woman for Increased impact of Behaviour Change Interventions

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If you were an animal, which animal would you be?
A Stallion
Introduction

• Somalia has one of the worst maternal and child health indicators in the world.
  • MMR: 732/100,000 live births
  • U5MR: 137/1000 live birth
  • FR: 6.6 Children per woman
  • mCPR: 5.1% in 2016.
  • About 1 in 10 marriages occurs before the girl is 15 years old, and about half before she is 18.

• Somalia is a highly patriarchal society where women can rarely take unilateral decisions even when it concerns her body or her health.

• Only few behavior change interventions have sought to first identify and target the influencers of the Somali woman’s choices and behavior.
A social network is a set of individuals or groups who are joined together by relationships that serve as channels through which emotional, informational, and financial resources flow.

This is based on the socioecological theory which seeks to explain the social dynamics that influences decisions individuals make.
PSI Somaliland is currently implementing a DFID sponsored SAHAN (Somali Advocates for Health and Nutrition) program.

We are applying HCD (Human Centered Design) to develop innovative behavior change interventions aimed at increasing utilization of maternal health services.

This makes a deep understanding of the Somali social network necessary for programmers especially since the target of the intervention is not the only decision maker for the adoption of new behaviours.
This is a qualitative study.

The first round applied a participatory workshop approach to develop sociograms. These were followed by a key influencer sessions that involved influencers named by the women.

A total of 36 WRA and 18 key influencers were involved in this round.

The participants were purposively selected to include:
- newly married,
- currently pregnant,
- Women having four or more children,
- those currently breastfeeding,
- women from urban areas,
- internally displaced WRA.

A Social Network Analysis software - Kumu - was used to help visualize the network connections and to calculate network metrics. It also allowed rapid visualization of network maps.
The mother and mother in law as well as the husband were identified as the key influencers of the WRA.

- The mother was described as key influencer and a confidant.
- Their mother in-laws are also very influential because of her relationship with their husbands.
- The healthcare provider is a key influencer because of their perceived knowledge of health issues.
- Women Community Leaders because of their experience.

The husbands affirmed their role as key influencers. Being the head and primary provider of the family.

The husbands added that they are influenced by their sheiks and their mothers.
Lessons Learnt

• Most times, adoption of a new behavior remains indecisive until counsel of one or more of the key influencers is sought.

• The SAHAN program is currently applying HCD to design interventions that target the key influencers of WRA as identified by the study.

• The in-depth interviews highlighted the hunger for more SRH information.
Recommendations

• A positive change in the attitude and perception of her key influencers like her husband, mother/mother-in-law, and Religious leaders would certainly make adoption and retention of new behaviour easier.

• BCC interventions must be developed targeted at the key influencers of the Somali WRA.
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