Insights into Optimal Breastfeeding Practices in Nigeria

Sascha Lamstein, Peggy Koniz-Booher, & Sarah Cunningham | World Breastfeeding Symposium (Aug 2016)

Nigeria adapted and adopted the Community Infant and Young Child Feeding (C-IYCF) Counselling Package, starting in 2011. Many groups have been involved in rolling it out across the country. The Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) has partnered with SPRING and UNICEF to evaluate the package when implemented at scale in Kaduna State.

Our baseline findings show that while community volunteers may learn key messages from the training, they may not fully grasp the importance of these behaviors.

Knowledge of behaviors, pre and post-training

- Breastfeeding women should eat more than before becoming pregnant
- Initiate breastfeeding immediately or less than 1 hour after delivery
- Exclusively breastfeed for 6 months
- Breastfed baby should first receive liquids at 6 months or older
- Continue breastfeeding for 2 or more years

- Pre-training
  - 95.8
  - 72.2
  - 81.2
  - 66.7
  - 40.0

- Post-training
  - 97.9
  - 99.6
  - 98.7
  - 75.1
  - 91.3

Attitudes toward behavior importance, post training

- Starting breastfeeding immediately after birth
- Breastfeeding exclusively for 6 months
- Breastfeeding for at least 2 years
- Breastfeeding children under 6 months of age on demand
- Giving newborn children glucose or sugar water at birth
- Giving children under 6 months old additional water if the weather is very hot
- Giving children under 6 months old thin or watery pap

- Agree
  - 62.8
  - 61.3
  - 57.7
  - 33.8
  - 29.1
  - 39.1
  - 32.3

- Strongly Agree
  - 35.5
  - 36.2
  - 40.2
  - 41.5
  - 43.2
  - 50.9
  - 54.3

- Disagree
  - 40.0
  - 41.5
  - 41.9

- Strongly Disagree
  - 33.8
  - 39.1
  - 32.3

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Baseline findings underscore the importance of going beyond trainings to unpack entrenched behaviors and address the misconceptions, barriers, and enablers to optimal breastfeeding practices.

While 64.9% of community leaders knew that breastfeeding should be initiated immediately after birth, few strongly agreed with the importance of this practice.

Knowledge of behaviors among Pregnant Women & Mothers of Children under Two

Many women are not very confident in their ability to follow optimal breastfeeding practices, which may not be surprising given that their decision-making power is limited. Turning knowledge into action will require social change to support women and families to adopt optimal IYCF practices.

Women's confidence in their ability to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months

Women's confidence in their ability to continue breastfeeding for 2 years

Who decides when a woman stops breastfeeding

While 62.5% of pregnant women report intending to exclusively breastfeed for 6 months, only 20.4% of children under 6 months old are exclusively breastfed. Only 14.5% are exclusively breastfed up to 4-5 months.

Exclusive breastfeeding rates by age group

Attitudes among Community Leaders toward behavior importance

Attitudes among Pregnant Women & Mothers of Children under Two toward behavior importance

Among pregnant women and women with children under 2