

KARAMOJA ON THE MOVE

Testing a peer learning and community theatre model to increase family planning use in agro-pastoralist Ugandan communities

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BACKGROUND



Misconceptions about side effects and pregnancy risk are key barriers to family planning (FP) use in Uganda's Karamoja region, where the modern contraceptive prevalence rate is 6.5% (UBOS and ICF 2018). Formative research conducted in Karamoja showed that the transition from a nomadic, agro-pastoralist society to a sedentary lifestyle – in which men ceased migrating to cattle kraals for extended periods of time – altered couple dynamics related to traditional post-partum child spacing practices (IRH 2015). It also identified community members' desire to learn more about their fertility and FP methods and how FP impacts their lives in interactive ways that are tied to traditional ceremonies, like theater.

RESEARCH

Research Objective: Describe the delivery, effectiveness and potential scalability of EDEAN

Methods: A quasi-experimental mixed-methods evaluation design

- Community level pre-post surveys
- Focus Group Discussions and In-depth interviews
- Ethnographic observational data collection



THE INTERVENTION

Peer learning and community theatre intervention to increase fertility awareness and family planning (FP) use among young women and men in Karamoja, Uganda

EDEAN was implemented over six months during 2016 and 2017 through Early Childhood Care and Development Centres (ECCD), a trusted institution in the region, to reach the parents of young children attending these centres. In each of the six participating communities, community members selected young men and women to participate in EDEAN as Moderators (18-30 years old) and Peer Group Members (18-25 years old).

In each community, a pair of trained Moderators facilitated gender-synchronized peer group meetings, rehearsals, and performances to 10 male and 10 female youths on four topics:

1. Couple Communication
2. Menstruation
3. Fertility
4. Family Planning

EDEAN Activities



Peer Group Meetings: Moderators learn core fertility awareness and FP content during a series of meetings. One single-sex and one mixed-sex meeting is held on each topic.



Community Theatre Performances: Peer Group Members enact Community Theatre Performances to share the information throughout their communities. During each performance, the Moderator poses questions to the audience to help ensure that the core content is properly understood.



Linkages to Health System: Village Health Team members (VHTs) and health center FP providers distribute FP invitation cards at community theatre events to encourage visits to providers.



Engaging Community Leaders: Community leaders, religious leaders, and elders attend orientation meetings to learn about EDEAN and are encouraged to support intervention activities. Action steps are identified during reflection meetings.



Training and Support: Community Development Officers (CDOs) train and support the Moderators to facilitate Peer Group Meetings and direct Community Theatre Performances.

FERTILITY AWARENESS & INFORMATION SEEKING

EDEAN performance viewers were more likely to have high fertility awareness score than non-viewers. Viewers were 2.5 times more likely to have a high fertility awareness score than non viewers (p<.0001)

High Fertility Awareness Scores

75% vs **61%**
Viewers vs Non-Viewers

Viewers were 6.5 times more likely to seek information about FP in the last three months, when compared to non-viewers (p<.0001).

Information Seeking

32% vs **5%**
Viewers vs Non-Viewers

Viewers were less likely to report that modern methods cause side effects (aOR=0.2; p<.0001), compared to non-viewers.

COUPLE COMMUNICATION

Viewers scored 1.6 higher on the couple's FP communication scale (p=0.038) than non-viewers. Qualitative findings also suggest increased discussions between partners and community members about fertility awareness and FP information, and debunking of myths about menstruation and modern FP methods.

High Couple Communication Score

76% vs **61%**
Viewers vs Non-Viewers

"I think I will first talk to my wife about spacing our children so that we can get food to feed them. Then I will also talk to my elder brother because he has many children."

- Male audience member, 15-25 years old

INTENTION TO USE MODERN FAMILY PLANNING

Intent to Use Modern FP

32% vs **5%**
Viewers vs Non-Viewers

Viewers were 6.3 times more likely to reported intention to use modern FP than non-viewers (p<.0001).

Younger viewers shared strong intent to use modern FP after watching performances. Viewers aged 15 to 25 years old were 9.3 times more likely to report intended modern FP use than non-listeners (p<.0001). Younger viewers were also twice as likely to report current modern FP use (aOR 2.7; p=.059).

Intent to Use Modern FP 15-25 Years Old

45% vs **9%**
Viewers vs Non-Viewers

KEY FINDINGS

General acceptability of community theater as an intervention was universal.

- Individuals exposed to EDEAN performances had greater demand for FP information and methods than those individuals not exposed.
- Viewership was **strongly associated with higher fertility awareness, intent to use modern FP, and communication** about fertility awareness and FP among women, men and younger viewers.
- Performances engendered discussion and **critical reflection about previously considered taboo topics and helped debunk myths and misconceptions** around menstruation and FP methods.

In settings with low availability and use of FP services like Karamoja, demand generation activities like **community theatre need to be paired with strong service delivery** platforms to enable behavior change from *intent* toward use of modern FP methods.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Technical experts, policy makers, program managers and researchers can:

- Integrate the EDEAN approach into cross-sectoral SBC programming
- Use and adapt the EDEAN materials, video, and other resources on IRH's website
- Conduct further research on scaling-up the peer learning and community theatre model to other contexts
- Advocate for program and research funding that links FP demand generation with service delivery platforms

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FACT

Fertility Awareness
for Community
Transformation