

Conducting longitudinal research in conflict-affected settings

Lessons learned from an evaluation of a GBV prevention and response program in Somalia and South Sudan

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Background

Few interventions in conflict affected areas are rigorously evaluated. JHU conducted a longitudinal study in 2 countries to evaluate the Communities Care Program (CC), a pilot UNICEF GBV primary prevention and response program in conflict-affected settings. Longitudinal studies are challenging to conduct in any setting, sharing key lessons learned.

Research Methods

- Partnered with local NGO teams: CISP in Mogadishu, Somalia; Voice for Change in Yei, South Sudan from Jan 2013-April 2017
- 4 sites in each area, CC program implemented in 1/2 of the sites
- Local research assistants (RA's) trained to recruit and collect surveys on iPads from randomly selected community members at each site
- Measured social norms and personal beliefs related to GBV, confidence in service providers to help survivors, and demographics
- Follow-up surveys at 12, 24 months post baseline
- Retention contacts between surveys (field visits/phone calls)
- Compared change over time between sites that did/did not receive CC

Results

Recruitment: Successfully recruited community member sample.

Somalia: **n=865** S. Sudan: **n =887**.

Few refusals (2.8% Somalia, 4% S Sudan)

Retention: Strong retention at 12 mo, crisis affected 24 mo for S. Sudan.

Somalia **83.8%** at 12 mo, **79.5%** at 24 mo

S. Sudan: **85.3%** at 12 mo, **20.6%** at 24 mo

✧ Renewed crisis hit Yei July '16. Security limited RA movement and massive displacement in S. Sudan 1.9 million refugees, 1.8 million IDPs (UNHCR & UNOHCA)

Lessons Learned



Collaborate at every step

Imperative to build collaborative relationship with local team, create all protocols together, include community leadership to ensure buy in. "Community guides" were essential for recruitment/follow-up over time.



Invest time in capacity building

Not simply training RAs, also "train the trainer" and skill building in leadership for quality control and sustainability. Trainings collaborative and interactive with role plays, field-testing, inter-rater reliability tests, and refreshers to ensure adherence to protocols. Expect high turnover,



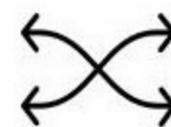
Build in multi-level oversight

Ensure clearly defined oversight procedures for every staff level, ongoing checks and balances and monitor regularly to identify issues early.



Pros/cons with utilizing technology

iPads for data collection: saves on data entry, enhanced security, survey easily updated, patterns revealed instantly. However: troubleshooting difficult not in-country, internet for data upload not always available, RA safety protocols to protect for theft etc. needed



Flexibility for logistics and safety

Protocols and timelines may need to be adjusted due to environmental factors (e.g. rainy season) or security issues impeding moment of the RA's. Emphasis on team safety over project needs.



You CAN ask about GBV

Very few declined to participate in the study, even given sensitive topic