

Publication

Impact of a complex gender-transformative intervention on maternal and child health outcomes in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: protocol of a longitudinal parallel mixed-methods study

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In the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) programs targeting women are implemented. In the context of the 'Mawe Tatu' program more equitable intra-household decision-making is stipulated by accompanying women's participation in VSLAs with efforts to engage men for more gender equality, expecting a positive effect of this combined intervention on the household economy, on child nutritional status, on the use of reproductive health services including family planning, and on reducing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).; A longitudinal parallel mixed method study is conducted among women participating in VSLAs in randomly selected project areas and among a control group matched for socioeconomic characteristics. Descriptive statistics will be calculated and differences between intervention and control groups will be assessed by Chi2 tests for different degrees of freedom for categorical data or by t-tests for continuous data. Structural equation modelling (SEM) will be conducted to investigate the complex and multidimensional pathways that will affect household economic status, child nutritional status and use of reproductive health services. Analysis will be conducted with STATA V.15. Concomitantly, qualitative data collection will shed light on the intra-household processes related to gender power-relations that may be linked to women's participation in economic activities and may lead to improvements of maternal and child health. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews will be conducted. All narrative data will be coded (open coding) with the help of qualitative data analysis software (Atlas TI).; Women's empowerment has long been identified as being able to bring about progress in various areas, including health. It has been shown that men's commitment to transforming gender norms is a sinequanone factor for greater equity and better health, especially in terms of reproductive health and child nutrition. This study is one of the first in this genre in DRC and results will serve as a guide for policies aimed at improving the involvement of men in changing attitudes towards gender norms for higher household productivity and better health.

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