

Safe Start: Progress Report

June 2017

BRIEFING NOTE

The Effect of a Novel Early Childhood Hygiene Intervention on Enteric Infections and Growth Faltering in Low-Income Informal Settlements of Kisumu, Kenya

Aim and objectives

Aim: The Safe Start trial aims to address challenges of enteric infections by designing and testing a novel child hygiene intervention in collaboration with community members, the health extension system and local government. The intervention will target children's caregivers with the aim of changing key hygiene behaviors.

Specific objectives of this project are:

- To design and implement a novel child hygiene intervention targeting caregivers of children at 3 months of age and delivered by Community Health Volunteers (CHVs).
- To measure the effect of the intervention on observed and reported household behaviors.
- To measure the effect of the intervention on fecal contamination in the child environment (food, drinking water and fomites).
- To evaluate the effect of the intervention on specific enteric infections and growth faltering among children.

Research Progress

Formative Research

The formative research was conducted in Obunga informal settlements between June - December 2016, and consisted of several components: the Exposure and Caregiver track; the CHV track, and Trials for Improved Practices (TIPS) including environmental modification learning visits. Key achievements include:

- Received ethical approval from Great Lakes University of Kisumu on 22nd April 2016, and received two approvals from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on 20th September 2016 and 9th November 2016.
- CHVs conducted effective community mobilization, which enabled smooth data collection.

- Enumerators were recruited and trained for one week on basic research methods, ethical issues in research, data collection tools and data management procedures.
- An initial census meant enumerators could successfully identify households where there were children in the correct age bracket.
- Focusing on the behavior of caregivers, children and CHVs, the research consisted of exploratory data collection and semi-structured interviews with caregivers and CHVs.
- A Safe Start starter kit for the intervention has been developed.

Exposure and Caregiver Track

- Enumerators undertook direct observations of oral contact behavior among 25 children between 3-9 months of age as well as conducting semi-structured interviews with 25 caregivers.

CHV Track

- We assessed current CHV practices, motivations, realities and experiences working in informal settlements in Obunga in the context of development of the intervention.
- 16 CHVs (11 female and 5 male) participated in structured observation of their household visits, structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and two focused group discussions.

Trials for Improves Practices (TIPS)

- The TIPS baseline survey was conducted in Obunga from January - March 2017.
- The target group was children from 6-9 months of age and the sample size was 80 children. Information was gathered on behavioural practices and collecting food samples (milk, porridge and mashed potatoes) to analyse pathogens in food fed to children aged 6-9 months.
- The control group was in Kamakowa and Kasarani and the site where the food samples were collected were Central and Segal Segal.
- Results of the pathogens in the food samples are currently being processed

Environmental Modification Additional Learning Visits

- As part of the TIPS phase, enumerators identified six households that would be willing to participate in further visits. These householders were given a number of additional items, including soap, a handwashing bucket and food storage and portioning containers. A number of questions were developed around these three items.
- These visits aimed to explore people's views about certain

items, how they are using them and whether the items were benefiting them.

- 30 Households in Central and Segga Segga with a child between 6-9 months received items related to food storage (2 round shallow containers and a deep storage container), infant feeding items (a bowl, a pack of baby feeding spoon and a cup) and handwashing with soap (soap dish and white 10 litre bucket).

Challenges

- It was a challenge to find babies within the age bracket during the TIPS recruitment. Some children had aged out of the eligible study population, and some households that had been sampled during the baseline were not eligible to receive the package.
- Due to baby spoons being in short supply in Kisumu, two households received a different type of baby spoon.
- Some households had relocated to other villages, and thus tracing them was difficult. Additionally, two households lived on the border between Segga Segga and Central, and thus a decision was needed on where to group them.
- Some community members asked for feedback sessions earlier than anticipated so that they could find out the results of the study carried out.

RIU Successes

- Leading and convening the County Policy and Research Technical Working Group, and have brought UNICEF on board as a member.
- Joined the national Inter-agency Coordinating Committee (ICC) as a research institution.
- Presented Safe Start preliminary results at a number of high-level meetings, including National ICC meetings on Environmental Hygiene and Sanitation, County ICC meetings on Environmental Hygiene and Sanitation, County WASH Network meetings and County Technical Working Group meetings on Policy and Research.
- Engaged the County Director for Health and other County Health Management Team especially the Nutrition and Public Health departments and the Kisumu East Sub-County team, who are all very supportive in the study.
- Member of the committee working on the domestication of Environmental Hygiene and Sanitation policy and bill for the County.

Contributors



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