

Effectiveness of the PHE Approach for Achieving Family Planning and Fertility Outcomes in Ethiopia

This policy brief examines the effects of implementing an integrated program that includes population, health and environmental (PHE) components compared to implementing a vertical family planning program in the Guraghe zone, SNNPR based on quantitative and qualitative data generated from a comparative cross sectional study conducted from October 2 to 8, 2012.

The Need for Studying PHE Approaches

Population, health and environment (PHE) are inextricably linked. A high population growth rate results in increased demand for resources, which then increases the rate at which these resources are exploited. As the environment becomes degraded, negative impacts are seen in people's well-being.

Although integrated population, health and environment (PHE) programs have been implemented in Guraghe Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia and in other regions, the outcomes of these projects had not been evaluated. To answer the question of the effectiveness of the PHE approach, this study evaluated the effectiveness of PHE approach in achieving family planning (FP) and fertility outcomes in the Guraghe zone in the project implemented by the Guraghe People's Self-help Development Organization (GPSDO). A total of 962 married women of reproductive age were interviewed about FP and fertility behaviors from one woreda where GPSDO implements its PHE program and one woreda where they implement a vertical family planning program. An in-depth interview of key informants from various sectors was also done using semi-structured interview guides.

The GPSDO PHE Approach

Since 2008, GPSDO has been implementing a PHE project which integrates environmental conservation and livelihood activities into the organization's reproductive health education and community based family planning program. Their program connects GPSDO Volunteer Community Health Workers with Health Extension Workers and Development Agents to deliver integrated messages and services in five woredas. GPSDO also works with youth clubs and women's groups on livelihood and conservation activities as well reproductive health awareness raising.

Outcomes of the Integrated Population, Health & Environment Approach

Women's FP and fertility knowledge, attitudes and practices

Women in the PHE woreda have better knowledge of commonly used FP methods than their counterparts in the non-PHE woreda. They also have a lower desire for more children, reported a lower number of children to be appropriate and had fewer children over the last five years. Women in the PHE woreda, who are non-new acceptors, were over four times more likely to use family planning during the study period than women in the non-PHE woreda (Table 1).

Table 1. FP and fertility outcomes for study woredas

Variables	PHE (n=480)	Non-PHE (n=482)	P
FP methods known by women out of 8 commonly used FP methods (±SD)	3.03 (±1.64)	2.74 (±2.26)	0.03200
CPR excluding new acceptors	78%	52%	P<0.0001
Percent of new acceptors of modern FP methods	26.2	69.5	P<0.0001
Percent of woman who had future desire for more children	42.7%	68.3%	P<0.0001
Number of more desired children by woman, (Mean ±SD)	1.9 (±2.1)	2.9 (±2.5)	P<0.0001
Appropriate number of children reported by woman (Mean ±SD)	4.8 (±2.7)	5.2 (±3.1)	0.03100
Live birth during the last 1 years	25.2%	33.1%	0.00500
Live birth during the last five years (Mean ±SD)	1.07 (±0.9)	1.34 (±0.8)	P<0.0001

Husband's' attitudes towards fertility & family planning

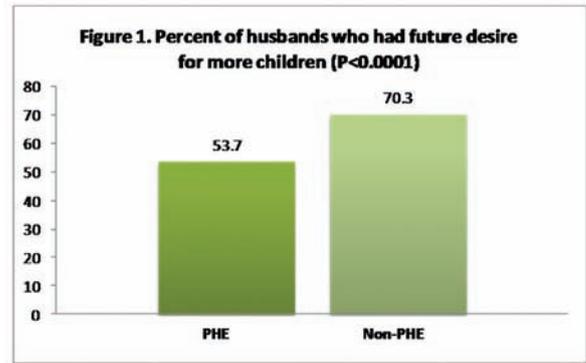
A lower percent of husbands had future desire for more children in the PHE woreda (Figure 1). A larger proportion (30.2%) of husbands in the PHE woreda support the use of FP methods compared with those in the non-PHE woreda (7.3%). Women whose husbands' support their use of FP methods were 17 times more likely to use FP methods. This increased to 20 times more likely when a sub-group analysis was done for women who were not new acceptors.

Integration of Population Health and Environment

There was a better integration of FP, health, and environmental conservation activities at the grassroots level in the PHE woredas. Women had greater access to cash, as a significant number of women had a control over income generating resources (58% PHE vs 15% non-PHE, $P < 0.0001$). This suggests that women's empowerment is better in the PHE woreda. The PHE approach overall has better value added outcomes, for example, a higher percent of households use energy saving stoves (9.8% PHE vs 2.7% non-PHE, $P < 0.0001$). The income generating schemes in the PHE woreda are more diverse and targeted to environmental and food security outcomes compared to the non-PHE woreda.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that overall the PHE approach has positive outcomes in fertility and FP behaviors and environmental conservation when compared to a vertical reproductive health only approach. There is a better integration of FP, health and environmental activities at the grassroots level in the PHE woreda as a result of greater collaboration between development actors. Husbands' support for FP is a strong independent predictor of family planning use among married women. The PHE approach has better value added outcomes such as a significantly higher number of men supporting FP use, more women earn a cash income and a higher percent of households using energy saving stoves.



Recommendations

Policy Level

- Develop regional and national policies that support multisectoral collaboration within government and with development partners, including NGOs.
- Develop mechanisms for multisectoral coordination from the kebele to federal level, such as command posts.

Program Level

- Include multisectoral approaches within projects and scale up existing PHE projects to sustain the positive fertility and FP behaviors such as lower desire for more children and support of FP use by the husbands seen in the PHE woreda.
- Include a diverse range of income generating schemes that are targeted to environmental and food security outcomes and better access of women to income.
- Develop strategies for networking with multisectoral stakeholders in project sites.

Research Level

- Conduct research that helps build understanding of the benefits of multisectoral approaches.
- Evaluate the effect of better fertility behaviors among married women and their husbands in PHE sites on family planning use.
- Conduct an in-depth study of the socio-economic drivers behind the high TFR observed in the Guraghe zone. ■

PHE Ethiopia Consortium is a non-profit non-governmental organization, established in 2008, working for integration of interventions in population, health and environment for improved livelihoods, community health and a sustainable economy. PHE-Ethiopia has over 47 member organizations working in the areas of FP/RH services, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, environmental rehabilitation, ecosystem restoration, conservation of biodiversity, improvement of livelihoods and adaptation to climate change. To visit our website and find the full report from this study, go to: www.phe-ethiopia.org.

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