

LEARNING BY LIVING REPORT ON INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON HEALTH

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INTRODUCTION

Health is a cultural concept because culture frames and shapes how people perceive the world and experiences. The influence of culture on health is vast: positively or negatively. During our learning experience in Mangochi, we evaluated the influence of culture on sexual reproductive health. This report gives an account of our learning experience in Mangochi.

MAIN OBJECTIVE: To assess the influence of culture on sexual and reproductive health

METHODOLOGY: The following methods were used to collect data

- Interview with key informants –senior chief Mkata and the health surveillance were interviewed
- Focus group discussion – at Mkata health centre with antenatal women on 23/08/16 in the morning and a group of men from Mkata village in the afternoon.
- Observation –we made a headcount of men who escorted their wives to health facility for sexual reproductive health services
- Reviewing of records at Jalasi Health centre where the HIV testing and counseling reports for the month of October, 2015 –June 2016 were used

FINDINGS

- Culture accepts preventive measures i.e. medical male circumcision which positively influences health by reducing risk HIV transmission and cervical cancer.
- Women are allowed in leadership position- this has a positive impact on health through easy implementation of SRH policies and guidelines.
- Sexual restrictions during pregnancy and after delivery. This affects people's health negatively as it encourages extra marital affairs thereby putting them at risk of contracting HIV.
- Harmful sexual behaviors like polygamy still exist- putting people at risk of contracting STI
- Traditional medicine used as a form of contraceptive (not scientifically proven to be effective) - Leading to unwanted pregnancies and increased maternal deaths

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

- Culture values men as key decision makers
- Male involvement remains a challenge in SRH
- Most men are in RSA affecting implementation of SRH policy and guidelines
- Community involvement has played a vital role in implementation of SRH policies.