Empowering Women Through the Community Health Worker Movement

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Objectives

• Review the Sustainable Development Goals with relation to gender equity
• Define women’s empowerment
• Describe the role of the Community Health Worker
• Illustrate one model of the Community Health Worker movement
End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls

Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM.

Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities in political, economic and public life
Empowerment is the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

World Bank
WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

• When women can envision a different life and consider themselves able and entitled to make decisions
• It is a goal itself, and also a promoter of development.
Women’s empowerment and Health

Women’s empowerment is directly linked to:

1. Modern Contraceptive use
2. Antenatal care
3. Skilled Birth Attendance

Ahmed, Creanga, Gillespie and Tsui (2010)
Who are Community Health Workers?
Alma Ata: Health Care for All through Primary Health Care

• 1978 Urgent call for all governments to promote the health of all people through the provision of primary health care
• Community Health workers were the cornerstone of this movement
Who are CHW?

- Members of the community
  - understand the health problems of the community best
  - effective agents of change
- Paid and unpaid
- Some receive non monetary incentives
- Low literacy levels, at times
- Involved in vertical and horizontal programming
Madreguia Program

• High incidence of Neural tube defects noted in the community
• Low folic acid intake noted
• Need for folic acid distribution
• Call for community involvement
• Large community turnout
Madreguia program

• Volunteer CHWs received one week training in community health
• Distributed folic acid to their neighbors of child bearing age
Maternal Knowledge Project Model

- Maternal Health Network Targeted Maternal Knowledge Intervention

Two Trainers

STS Health Promoters (9)

“Madreguias” Volunteer Community Educators (~100)

Women of Childbearing Age (>1000)
Outcomes

- Statistically significant improvement in knowledge about
  - Neonatal care
  - Prenatal care
  - Sanitation

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Conclusions

Use of focused, educational interventions by an existing network of trained health promoters can increase overall maternal knowledge among child-bearing women.
University of Cincinnati-Wuqu Kawoq Partnership

• WK is an NGO in Guatemala
• Mission: Provider medical care to indigenous people in their preferred language
• TCH/UC Family Medicine sends interdisciplinary teams of health care professionals to provide medical care four times per year
• Most teams offer trainings for WK nurses and CHWs
Involvement in Healthcare...

• Gives women a voice and platform that they would not otherwise have

• When women are engaged in one aspect of their community (eg health), they are more likely to become involved in another (political, economic, social).
References