

The contribution of microfinance-based interventions to men's participation in health projects in Tanzania in health projects in Tanzania

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Men's involvement and participation in health projects have been a public concern for several years. Men continue to participate and engage themselves in health projects at a low rate in Africa. As the heads of household, men regulate all assets, determine the healthcare options and serve as deciding factor for where and when they should seek out medical care. Thus, in order to efficiently improve women's health undoubtedly requires programs that will target men's involvement, support, and education. Yet, we lack effective strategies to involve and engage men in health projects throughout Tanzania. This study aimed at assessing the contribution of microfinance – based interventions to men's participation in health projects in Tanzania. It explained the three specific objectives which were first, to examine the influence of microfinance – based intervention on health seeking behavior of men in Tanzania. Secondly, to assess the contribution of microfinance based intervention to the socio-economic wellbeing of men who participated in health programs in Tanzania and lastly, this study aimed to uncover the constraints of young men from participating in health projects as well as their recommendations for improving future interventions that would address socio-economic challenges and health-seeking barriers for men. Three focus group discussions were conducted with 27 young men out of 161 who took a microfinance loan of 160,00 TSH/= (USD 70) as a part of Vijana Vijiweni II project. Key informant interviews with health workers (nurses) (n=2), loan officer (n=1) and project officer (n=1) were also carried out. Loans were provided in a group of 3 to 5 people who attended business management and health training. Using a semi-structured discussion guide, researchers asked questions to learn and better understand the experiences of young men and if their health seeking behaviors changed during and translated and transcribed into English. Data was then coded and analyzed based on the objectives of the study. The findings showed that integrating microfinance-based interventions with health projects (VVII project) have motivated men to participate in health projects. Participants reported mixed experiences with the microfinance loans. The opportunity to access business training, receive a loan and eventually open a business were some of the benefits. Yet, they reported that the low worth of loans fused with the group structure required to receive a loan served as a major challenge. Most of the participants reported that even though they had learned more about the benefits of checking their health, the financial and time costs of visiting clinics prevented them from changing their health-seeking behaviors. They recommended that future interventions provide larger loan amounts to individuals instead of groups, incorporate health insurance coverage to reduce the costs of health services, and offer different business opportunities a side from loans. These strategies could provide financial opportunity while minimizing the risk of upcoming projects' failures. This

study found evidence that integrating microfinance-based intervention with health project could be a best strategy to motivate men to participate to the health projects throughout Tanzania. The governmental implication of this is to further the efforts toward the provision of health education revisionment of current health policies to allow organizations and other financial institutions to provide health insurance services.