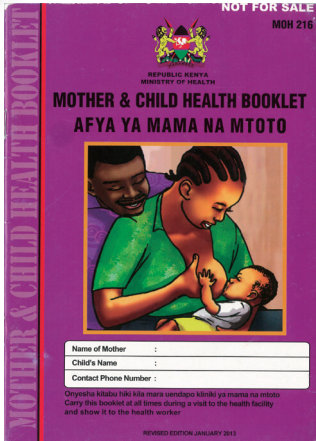




KENYA: What mothers have MCH Booklet?



Maternal and Child Health Handbook, Kenya, 2013

Introduction

The Mother and Child Health (MCH) Booklet, the Kenya's official MCH Handbook, was designed to provide health workers and mothers with practical guidance on maternal and child health for linkage of services across the continuum of maternal, newborn and child health care. As the MCH Booklet was developed by the Kenyan Ministry of Health (MOH) as an essential integrated document across national programs, there was a need for precisely assessing the factors associated with ownership of the MCH Booklet in Kenya.

Development of the MCH Booklet

The concept of the MCH Booklet was inspired by Japan's experience, when one of officials of the MOH participated in a training course in Japan in 2000. Then, the MOH took lead to review existing home-based records related to antenatal care, delivery, postnatal care, child welfare, family planning, maternal immunization against tetanus, child immunization, and growth monitoring. The MOH further initiated a series of broader consultation processes on home-based records involving various stakeholders on

maternal health, child health, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS.

Health workers' recognition of need for earlier diagnosis and treatment of pediatric HIV led to piloting of the Booklet in Nyanza and Western Provinces in 2007. Good practices in the pilot areas demonstrated a certain feasibility of the Booklet. As its sustainability was ensured by being incorporated into national standard guidelines, a small, 34-page, A5-size MCH Booklet was launched in 2010 by the MOH. Having enjoyed strong supports from development partners and other stakeholders, the Child Health Coordination Committee of the MOH approved replacement of all the previously implemented separate maternal and child health cards by the MCH Booklet through its provision for free of charge. The Booklet has been periodically revised so as to be adapted to the country's updated MCH policy. The user's guide was compiled into the MCH Booklet for the purpose of promoting its proper use by the facility-based health workers and community health workers (CHWs).

Who own the MCH Booklet?

The recent study reported that ownership of the MCH Booklet positively associated with the higher health knowledge and proper health-seeking behavior among mothers. In the study, the sampling frame composed of a total of 11,906 children aged 12–23 months in 64 community units (CUs) of four districts of Nyanza province (Siaya, Ugenya, Gem and Kisumu West) was prepared. Of them, 2,560 children were aged 12-23 months were selected by using simple random sampling method. Of their mothers (=2,560), 2,051 were interviewed by using a structured questionnaire on their socio-economic status and ownership of the MCH Booklet. Most mothers (92%) had the MCH Booklet. The factors identified as significantly related to the ownership of the MCH Booklet were child's sex (male), caregivers'



▲ Figure 1. History of MCH Booklets developed in Kenya

relationship to the child (biological mother), maternal age (not older than 30 years of age), level of health knowledge (more knowledgeable about maternal health), birth interval (birth interval longer than 24 months), household wealth index (poor household) and CHW performance (high performance). Interestingly, among the mothers who rated performance of CHWs as high, the possession rate of the MCH Booklet was significantly high. This result suggests that the MCH Booklet has potentials to improve overall performance of health systems. Highly-rated and well-performing CHWs frequently check the health status of both the mother and the child, and thereby encourage mothers to own and safeguard the MCH Booklet.

Conclusion

The mothers who are either young or from poor households are more likely to find value in owning the MCH Booklet. This may imply the MCH Booklet could serve as the effective and sustainable interface between vulnerable mothers and health workers. Thus, the MCH Booklet should be strategically leveraged not only as a self-monitoring tool but also as a communication

tool that helps vulnerable mothers feel protected.

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Further readings

1. Kawakatsu Y, et al. Effectiveness of and factors related to possession of a mother and child health handbook: an analysis using propensity score matching. *Health Educ Res* 2015; **30**(6): 935-46.
2. Mudany MA, et al. Enhancing Maternal and Child Health using a Combined Mother & Child Health Booklet in Kenya. *J Trop Pediatr* 2015; **61**(6): 442-7.
3. Gathoni KE, Magembe OA. Utilization of Mother and Child Booklet among Mothers Attending Well Baby Clinic in Nakuru Central District *Int J Sci Res* 2013; **4**(4): 2642-8.



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▼ **Table 1. Factors associated with the possession of an MCH Handbook in Nyanza Province, Kenya**

Variables	Multivariate analysis Adjusted odds ratio
Child's sex	
Female	Ref.
Male	1.236 *
Biological mother or not	
Other	Ref.
Biological mother	2.214 ***
Age group (years)	
<20	Ref.
20–24	0.782
25–29	0.732
30–34	0.496 **
≥35	0.528 *
Maternal health knowledge	
Low	Ref.
High	1.408 **
Household wealth index	
Poor	Ref.
Rich	0.740 **
Performance of CHWs	
Poor	Ref.
Higher	1.395 **

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$