Mother to Mother Support Groups

*Improving IYCF Practices in the Community*

Margaret Brawley, MPH
Communication & Strategy Development Advisor
What are Mother to Mother Support Groups (MtMSGs)?

- Groups of women, either pregnant or with children under 5 yrs
- Learn about IYCF issues via education, activities, demonstration & discussion
- Support each other & share experiences
- Linked closely with health facility for greatest impact
Background

- Initiated MtMSG program in Western Province in late 2008 (40 grps)
- Conducted feedback meeting in late April on progress
- Making revisions/improvements to program & tools
- Mobilizing 20 new groups this month, as continue to support existing 40 groups
Formation of MtMSGs

- 8-15 pax per group
- Audience: pregnant & lactating women; caretakers/parents of children under 5 yrs
- Existing community group that meets regularly
- Grandmothers, mother-in-laws, partners invited to attend sessions quarterly
Facilitation

• 1-2 facilitators per group
• Trained in 4-5 days by MOH staff
  ✓ Review technical knowledge, practical demonstrations, reporting & expectations
  ✓ Training includes HWs from nearest facility
  ✓ Training also includes field supervisors of MtMSGs
  ✓ Create workplans
Topics: MtMSG Trainer’s Guide & Participant Manual

- Advantages of BF
- Initiation BF w/in 30 min of birth
- Positioning & attachment
- EBF
- BF difficulties
- Expressing breastmilk
- How to feed a baby by the cup
- Infant feeding & HIV
- Feeding 6-24 months
- Preparing & storing foods safely
Expectations of Facilitators

• Engage group members in monthly discussion about IYCN in interactive, participatory manner

• Conduct health talks at HF & other public forums

• Attend quarterly update meetings

• Household visits to members

• Referrals to health facilities
Strengths of the Program

• Mothers generally eager & open to information

• Sharing experiences & demonstrations had strong impact on mothers’ attitudes

• Linkages with HF, where done, was highly effective
Areas for Improvement

- Better supervision & feedback mechanisms required
- More training on facilitation techniques
- Continued resistance from cultural myths & misconceptions
- Lack of support from men
- Competing priorities of mothers
- Lack of motivation / incentives
Butere District: A Success Story

• 5 MtMSG facilitators liaised with HWs of Butere District Hospital

• Set up system of health education talks at HF & outreaches
Visible results

• Increase # of sessions
• # women attending clinic has increased
• HF sees less sick children; more focus on immunization & GM
• More men accompanying wives
• Decrease stigma; more couples for C&T
• Tracing defaulters from grps
Thank you!