

Sub-theme 2.4. Reproductive Health, Maternal and Child Health

Rationale

The world has set itself the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that directly or indirectly address health problems. Although all age groups of a population are at the risk of health and health-related problems, women and young people are the most vulnerable groups of a population.

Reproductive health is a major concern in Ethiopia. The country has the poorest reproductive, obstetrical, and child health records. Per 100,000 live births, 676 women die of pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. Maternal deaths are related to prolonged labour, obstructed labour, bleeding, unsafe abortion and infection while neonatal sepsis (including pneumonia), prematurity, low birth weight, hypothermia, and hypoglycaemia are the leading causes of child mortality.

Adolescence/youth is a period of transition from a dependent to an independent life. Unless properly guided and handled, this phase of human life is prone to various risks and crises. Reproductive health and STI concerns during this period are immense. School dropouts, lack of jobs and poverty are issues that trigger a number of consequences. Early marriage, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and motherhood, STI/HIV/AIDS, prostitution, migration, human trafficking, and entering the vicious cycle of poverty are the major consequences of poor handling and guidance of young people.

The disease toll from STI/HIV, opportunistic infections and reproductive cancer is huge. High fertility due to low rate of use of contraceptives and high unmet needs for family planning are the cause of population pressure in the rural setting and unsafe abortion in the urban community.

Aim

This sub-theme focuses on research related to reproductive health, maternal and child health, young people's reproductive health and related issues, and HIV/AIDS problems.

Description

This sub-theme focuses on reproductive health problems such as reproductive and sexual health issues with particular focus on women, children, and young people. The subtheme also researches on sexually transmitted illnesses including HIV/AIDS, substance use/abuse, unmet need for reproductive health services, and harmful traditional practice on young people, women, and children. Maternal health problems associated with pregnancy and childbirth, nutrition and hygienic practices during pregnancy and lactation are vital thrusts of this sub-theme. Furthermore, research on child health issues including health promotion activities, causes of child morbidity and mortality, ways of creating favourable and productive socio-economic and learning conditions for young people is also a concern of this sub-theme.

Potential Collaborators

Domestic and overseas universities, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nation Fund for Population Activity (UNFPA), Ministry of Sciences and Technology, Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Institute, HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office, Ministry of Health, etc.

Expected Output

- Enhanced knowledge, awareness, and skills to improve proportion of births attended by health personnel
- Increased universal access to reproductive health information and services
- Increased knowledge, skills and technologies and adoption of best practices for reducing maternal mortality, reproductive morbidity/mortality associated with unsafe abortion, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and other harmful traditional practices
- New and enhanced methods of increasing the use of family planning, antenatal care service, skilled delivery, and reduced post-partum complications

- Improved knowledge and skills for decreasing neonatal, infant, and under-five morbidity and mortality
- Increased awareness and technologies for reducing the transmission rate of STI/HIV/AIDS in the population in general and from mother to child in particular
- Enhanced knowledge and means for improving socio-economic, health, and learning conditions for young people

Research Areas

2.4.1. Reproductive and sexual health

This research area focuses on reproductive health problems across the human life span, harmful traditional practices, early marriage and adverse pregnancy outcomes, family planning, risky sexual behaviours and use/abuse of substances, sexual orientations, sexually transmitted illnesses, male reproductive health concerns, infertility and reproductive dysfunction, cancer of reproductive system. It is also concerned with interaction of reproductive and sexual health with population growth and development.

2.4.2. Maternal and child health

This research area focuses on maternal health issues such as skilled delivery attendance, pregnancy related issues, cancer of the cervix, uterus and breast, breast feeding, maternal mortality, determinants and causes. Comprehensive integrated community intervention for safer pregnancy and childbirth are also the subject of this research area. The research area also focuses on neonatal and childhood morbidity and mortality, child growth, and development and schooling and socialisation of the child.

2.4.3. Young people's reproductive health and substance use/abuse

This research area focuses on reproductive health and related concerns of adolescents and the youth. The relation between schooling, employment, and engagement in paid labour activities and reproductive health outcomes will be studied. The research area focuses also on substance

use/abuse and the role of peer pressure on reproductive functions and outcomes. Youth/adolescent-centred activities such as clubs, adolescent friendly health/reproductive health services, sporting activities and their role in shaping reproductive health functions will be researched. Physical, psychological, and mental and cognitive consequences of ill-reproductive health are also studied under this research area.

2.4.4. HIV/AIDS

This research area focuses on transmission and prevention mechanisms of HIV/AIDS, vulnerability to HIV/AIDS with particular focus on adolescents, women, and children. The use of substances and alcohol from the perspective of the disease is also investigated. The use of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV/AIDS, and the social and economic consequences of the disease and new approaches to tackle it is also be addressed. The research area also focuses on STI (Sexually Transmitted Illnesses) and opportunistic infections.

Beneficiary

The wider public, women, young people, hard-to-reach population, students, long distance truckers, scientific community, government, policy makers, industries, research institutions, etc.