

The WISH Effect

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The WISH Effect report describes a qualitative study of Women Investing Savings for Health (WISH) groups undertaken under the auspices of PRRINN-MNCH's Operations Research activities. The study was conducted in Nahuche I and Nahuche II districts of Bungudu Local Government Area, Zamfara state, Nigeria from May 2010 through July 2010.

The objectives of the study were to evaluate Women Investing Savings for Health group practices and perceptions of the groups within the community, as well as devise recommendations to optimize group benefits and acceptability within the community.

The research question asked was: 'What are the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of Nahuche community members of the WISH groups?' Ethics approval was obtained from the Operations Research Advisory Committee and Ethics Subcommittee of the Zamfara State Ministry of Health.

The study employed mixed-methods to fully probe the research questions. Data were collected through 10 focus group discussions and 7 key informant interviews. Data were analyzed by developing themes from the patterns that emerged from individual data points. Two researchers independently coded all data and compared results to reach consensus.

Key findings include consistent emphasis by participants on expansion of group savings and other group activities, inclusion of husbands in the process of group awareness raising and group member recruitment. Additionally, very positive perceptions of the WISH group were found throughout the community and among local health service providers.

Variation was reported on issues of group leadership as well as group financial management and procedures.

Challenges related to the Women Investing Savings for Health groups included internal trust issues related to the management of the savings fund and subsequent changes in membership, ignorant and unsupportive community members, and the limitations of the savings fund in providing for the entire group's health needs.

The key group effects identified are increased health literacy and knowledge among group members and the community, increased and more active health care seeking behaviors and health service utilization dominantly among group members and increasingly among the broader community, and improved self perception of relationship and self among group members.

Although the researchers are confident in the validity and reliability of the research and findings, potential limitations to the study include translation and transcription, one incomplete focus group, and, in one case, focus group sample size.

Key recommendations arising from this study include the establishment of a designated WISH Group Coordinator to support new and ongoing Women Investing Savings for Health Groups; utilization of group member identification cards; occurrence of regular intergroup experience sharing activities; consistent inclusion of husbands for support of the groups; maintenance of self-assistance mindset and group autonomy; employment of the WISH Group Manual; and improvement of primary health care center and community interaction and primary health care center staff teambuilding.

(Please email info@prinn-mnch.org for the full report or the WISH manual)