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TRAction Project Overview

The Translating Research into Action (TRAction) Project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), funds studies to develop, test, and compare approaches to more effectively deliver health interventions, increase utilization, achieve coverage, and scale-up evidence-based interventions for priority health problems. The project is managed under a Cooperative Agreement by University Research Co., LLC (URC) in collaboration with its partner, the Harvard University School of Public Health.

Through implementation research, the TRAction Project addresses “know-do” gaps, or delays between discovery of effective ways to combat the causes of poor health and the application of these proven interventions on a wide scale. Rigorous research demonstrates the effectiveness of numerous methods of reducing health disparities around the world. But national level decision-makers, donors, and program implementers in many settings often lack evidence on how to successfully introduce and implement these methods on a national scale. If each country’s Millennium Development Health Goals are to be met in the targeted timeframes, these “know-do” gaps must be closed. Thus, the USAID funded TRAction is working to support the Global Health Initiative principle of promoting research and innovation through local ownership and leveraged partnerships in order to scale up equitable and sustainable efforts to “do what works.”

Research Priorities

To address these “know-do” gaps, the TRAction Project is supporting research in a number of areas relevant to maternal and child health.

Integrated Community Case Management (iCCM): iCCM is an approach to healthcare that involves training community-based health workers to assess, clarify, and provide basic treatment or referral for childhood illnesses including diarrhea, pneumonia, and malaria. TRAction is funding three areas of iCCM research:

- **Cost and Financing:** To develop and test a model that program planners and managers can use to assess the costs and financing of introducing and expanding iCCM programs.
- **Embedded Research:** To conduct implementation research on improving monitoring and evaluation data collection systems within iCCM programs.
- **Policy:** To identify, at the national level in select countries and at the global level, factors that have hindered or supported policy and program development regarding CCM of childhood and newborn illness.

MNCH, Nutrition, Reproductive Health/Family Planning and Tuberculosis Services in Bangladesh:

This research, conducted by the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) and supported by the USAID Bangladesh mission, aims to identify strategies for increasing access, utilization, quality and impact of services to improve tuberculosis, maternal, newborn and child health, nutrition, population and family planning, and reproductive health in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh.

Malaria: TRAction-supported malaria research in Tanzania aims to determine the most effective methods of using indoor residual spraying and long-lasting insecticide-treated bednets as combined or complementary interventions to improve protection against clinical malaria in children.

Disrespect and Abuse in Facility-based Childbirth: Disrespectful, abusive care of women during childbirth, such as humiliation, denial of privacy, discrimination, and overt physical and verbal abuse, is a global problem in both developed and developing countries that can discourage women from delivering in facilities with skilled birth attendants. TRAction is funding research in Kenya and Tanzania to determine the extent of this abuse and identify ways to reduce the problem.

Performance-based Financing (PBF): Performance-based financing provides incentives to health providers who comply with national norms of care and meet the expectations of clients. TRAction-supported research will focus on how PBF schemes can improve the quality of emergency obstetric and neonatal care.

Indoor Air Pollution (IAP): Emissions resulting from cooking with solid-fuel on poorly-designed traditional stoves or open fires pose a substantial threat to health. TRAction is funding research in India and Uganda on behavior change interventions that can increase the acquisition and correct use of improved cookstoves.

TRAction is currently in the process of developing Requests for Applications in other research areas, including: ***recognition and referral for neonatal complications; targeting of maternal and newborn services to high risk groups; equity; integration of maternal, newborn and child health services; and task shifting of MNCH services.***

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Duke University Research on Acquisition and Correct Use of Improved Cookstoves in India



Two women in India using an improved cookstove.

Photo courtesy of Bryan Willson.

Research Overview

Duke University has been awarded funds to conduct research on introducing various behavior change communication (BCC) components into Project Surya, which has been working to increase dissemination and use of cleaner-burning cooking technologies in Uttar Pradesh, India. After refining common theories of behavior change based on the Indian context and identifying promising BCC interventions, Duke will implement and evaluate the impact of these interventions

on improved cookstove (ICS) acquisition and correct use. The study will take into account contextual factors, cost, and reliability of data collection methods. Partners on the project include The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) of New Delhi, India, Nexleaf Analytics of Los Angeles, California, and Scripps Institution of Oceanography, San Diego.

Research Design

An initial planning phase will involve extensive research using expert advisors, existing data, and literature reviews. Baseline analysis, consisting of a survey of 2000 households, will lay the groundwork for testing the effects of the intervention on the adoption and correct use of ICS.

Interventions will include:

- Stove Price Modifications – Households will be offered various levels of subsidies, ranging from zero to full subsidy, or financing options that allow households to spread payments over time.
- An information campaign will either give visual feedback to households on indoor air pollution (for example, by showing them dirty air filters placed in their homes), or education on time savings, money savings, and health benefits related to improved stoves.
- A social marketing campaign will use community-level social mobilization to promote the health and environmental benefits of improved stoves.

The analysis of these interventions, using a quasi-experimental study design, will compare data on household stove behaviors before and after the interventions across matched intervention and control communities. Cohorts will be stratified by size and type of community (urban vs. rural), presence of institutional structures (NGOs vs. lack of NGOs), and availability of fuel alternatives. Data analysis will also assess correct stove use, household preferences for specific attributes of cooking technologies, the impact of ICS uptake method on sustained use, costs and benefits of ICS, and social and emotional factors that influence ICS adoption.

Data Collection

Baseline measurements will be collected through focus groups, site visits, and pilot surveys. Intervention impacts will be assessed using household questionnaires, cookstove temperature monitoring (to measure stove use), and cellphone-based air pollution measurement (to quantify black carbon emissions).

Scale- up

Results of the study will be used to:

- Develop a guide that can be used to determine potential sales and supply of ICS;
- Inform a protocol for monitoring sales, use, delivery costs, and key supply and demand shifters of ICS;
- Inform Project Surya's demonstration and replication phases, the Indian government's National Biomass Cookstoves Initiative, and the work of other stove groups; and
- Apply the identified benefit-cost outcomes for each intervention to other stove programs.

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Impact Carbon Research on Acquisition and Correct Use of Improved Cookstoves in Uganda



Selling improved cookstoves in Uganda.

Photo courtesy of Impact Carbon.

Research Overview

Impact Carbon has been awarded funds to conduct research on expanding the Uganda Efficient Stove Project, which has commercially sold thousands of improved charcoal stoves in Uganda. The study will test behavior change communication (BCC) strategies to increase the purchase and use of improved, clean-burning wood stoves in regions of Uganda where wood, not charcoal, is the primary fuel. Partners on the project include the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley, the Centre for Integrated Research and Community Development (CIRCODU), and Global Village Energy Partnership (GVEP).

Research Design

The baseline assessment will collect data on demographics, fuel and time use, cooking patterns, knowledge and attitudes, and health symptoms related to cooking. A feasibility study will identify the most locally appropriate cookstove design, and will inform the randomized intervention trials.

Interventions will include:

- A novel sales offer allowing households a free trial of the stove, time payments spread out over time, and the right to return the stove.
- Selection of some women to purchase their stoves early and others to purchase their stoves later, to allow comparison between the groups on the effects of the improved stoves on time, money, particulate matter, and health.
- Provision of peer training, with one group receiving training early and another receiving it later.

The study analysis will involve multiple comparisons. Cookstove uptake will be compared between villages receiving the novel and traditional sales offers. Stove use and impact on time savings, fuel purchasing, particulate matter exposure for cooks, and health symptoms will be compared between early buyers using the improved stoves and late buyers using the traditional stoves. Stove use, knowledge, perceptions, and impact will be assessed between groups receiving peer training early and late. Analysis will also determine community response to stove attributes, social norms, prices women are willing to pay for improved stoves, and social support for using improved stoves.

Data Collection

Data will be collected through surveys, particulate monitors, wood weighing, kitchen performance tests, and monitoring of stove sales, payment and return rates. The Stove Use Monitoring System (SUMS) will be placed in homes to determine the frequency of use of traditional and improved stoves.

Scale- up

Results will be used to inform optimal strategies for scaling up and replicating the Uganda Efficient Stove Project. A program guide, "Optimizing Behavior Change in Fuel Efficient Stoves," will be developed to facilitate scale-up of other cookstove projects. The project partners will also engage with stakeholders such as community members, non-governmental organizations, and local ministries in Uganda to collect feedback and facilitate results-based improved stove program design and policies.

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PATH Research on Acquisition and Correct Use of Improved Cookstoves in Uganda



Woman cooking with improved cookstove.

Photo courtesy of CREEC.

Research Overview

PATH, the Seattle-based Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, has been awarded funds to conduct research on integrating behavior change communication (BCC) interventions into the World Bank-funded Biomass Energy Initiative for Africa (BEIA) project in Uganda. PATH will work with BEIA, which is helping stove programs scale up their operations and achieve economic viability, to establish local production and dissemination of an efficient, low-emission, relatively low-cost TopLit UpDraft (TLUD) gasifier stove. They will evaluate BCC activities that can improve the acquisition and use of these stoves. Partners on the project include the Berkeley Air Monitoring Group (BA), the Center for Research in Energy and Energy Conservation (CREEC), and the Joint Energy and Environment Programme (JEEP).

Research Design

Baseline assessments will measure fuel consumption, indoor air quality, and stove usage. Formative research on current attitudes and practices related to cookstoves will be collected with key informant interviews and focus group discussions to inform the behavior change intervention.

Interventions will include:

- Direct-sales – Primarily female community agents will encourage stove purchase by educating community members on the benefits of the TLUD stove.
- Demonstrations – Early adopters of the TLUD stoves will perform cooking demonstrations at local markets to demonstrate stove attributes.

- Integration with Village-Level Household Health Visits – Village Health Teams will be trained to integrate IAP and improved cookstove information into their routine home visits.
- Other BCC activities, identified through the formative research, may include sensitizing leaders, counseling, visiting support groups, giving health talks, engaging male leaders, etc.

The program will be analyzed by comparing data on stove usage, product uptake, indoor air quality, energy efficiency, and consumer responses from the different intervention and control groups in select Kampala-area villages in Uganda.

Data Collection

Project data will be collected using monitoring forms, observation checklists, household surveys, Stove Use Monitoring Systems (to track stove use with temperature sensors), kitchen performance tests (to assess energy efficiency, particulate matter, and carbon monoxide concentrations), and cost assessments.

Scale- up

Depending on the results, PATH will work with stakeholders to facilitate one of three scale-up approaches:

- Form a cooperative society, including the sales team and product suppliers, and nominate coordinators;
- Engage an established social marketing organization in Uganda (i.e. Living Goods) to work with the sales people and suppliers; or
- Conduct a success or failure analysis and identify lessons learned.

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