

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

### Enhancing Maternal Infant and Young Child Training and Counselling in Kisumu West

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#### **Abstract**

Improving maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) is a crucial global public health priority. Adequate nutrition during the early stages of life plays a fundamental role in ensuring optimal growth, development and long term health outcomes. This abstract examines the significance of education and counselling interventions in promoting optimal nutrition for mothers, infants and young children. Study objectives were to assess MIYCN knowledge and practices among caregivers, identify barriers to effective MIYCN education and counselling among community health assistants (CHA's) and document recommendations for enhancing MIYCN training and counselling in Kisumu West. A qualitative study was conducted within Kisumu West sub-county of Kisumu County, based on 4 focus group discussions with caregivers of young children below 36 months (n=40) and in-depth interviews with community health volunteers (n=8). Focus group transcripts were coded independently and the same coding process and thematic analysis were applied to the in-depth interviews. Caregivers identified 3 domains influencing the outcome of MIYCN to be the health care provider counselling, support from family and community members and food safety knowledge and practices. CHA's identified barriers to MIYCN provider training as well as caregiver counselling which included limited access to financial and counselling resources and limited qualified staff to deliver infant and young child feeding counselling. CHA's strongly recommended incorporating culturally appropriate and context-specific approaches and engaging multiple stakeholders such as community leaders, village elders and male partners as effective strategies to enhance MIYCN. The successful implementation of MIYCN requires a comprehensive approach that addresses sociocultural factors, ensure sustainable support systems and foster collaboration among stakeholders.

**Keywords:** maternal infant and young child nutrition, caregivers, community health assistants