Understanding family roles and influence to develop culturally-grounded and effective community nutrition interventions

GRANDMOTHER
PROJECT CHANGE THROUGH CULTURE

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Characteristics of Collectivist Cultures related to MCN

• Childrearing is not only the responsibility of the biological parents, it is multi-generational. Various family members participate, mainly women.

• Decision-making regarding MCN is collective, involving different generations of family members. Roles and responsibilities are specialized according to gender and age.

• Senior women, or grandmothers, are culturally designated advisors, **teachers**, and supervisors of young women regarding pregnancy and child rearing.
Characteristics of Collectivist Cultures continued...

• Young women are expected to follow the advice of elder women, and rarely make independent decisions.

• Men are the titular ‘head’ of the household, but defer to elder women’s advice and authority in most matters of women’s and children’s health.

• Men are expected to provide basic resources for nutrition-health needs. When there are serious problems, men are involved to provide necessary resources.

• Men are not involved in everyday care of pregnant women, infants, or children, and these tasks are not their areas of expertise.
Components of *Focus on Family & Culture* Assessment: Categories of Information Collected

- **Cultural Norms and Practices**
  - Local attitudes, knowledge and cultural practices affecting MCN

- **Family and Community Roles and Structures**
  - Gender and age-specific roles, influence and relationships within families and community related to MCN

- **Core Cultural Values and Traditions**
  - Cultural values rooted in spiritual, religious, ethnic identity that affect gender and age-specific roles, family structure and values affecting women and children’s development, including MCN
Collectivist Cultures: Core Roles and Influence of Different Family on MCHN

• Women of reproductive age (WRA)
  – Carry out daily domestic tasks within the household (cleaning, cooking, etc.) and outside (water, wood, farming, etc.),
  – Bear children, child care, care of other family members, income generating activities

• Grandmothers
  – Advise WRA on traditional norms and practices related to MCHN (pregnancy, newborns, young children, adolescent girls)
  – Participate in preparation of meals for infants/young children and in feeding them, advise on breastfeeding, coordinate and advise on care of sick children
  – Advise men/fathers on all aspects of MCHN
  – Income generation, family ‘bank’ for emergencies (in many cases), oversee domestic tasks and delegation of responsibilities
Collectivist Culture Patterns: Core Roles and Influence of Different Family on MCHN

• Fathers of young children
  – Provide resources for family, ensure security of family
  – Promote family cohesion
  – Make major decisions affecting finances

• Grandfathers
  – Advise on major family decisions/problems
  – Care for grandchildren over age 5, educate family on moral and traditional values
  – Maintain and repair the house

• Elder daughters
  – Carry out household chores, learn how to care for children over age 1, follow the orders of parents and grandparents