

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



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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