Background

- Since the global voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) program started in 2007, it has primarily been attracting younger boys.
- In 2016, the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) provided technical guidance to the 14 countries implementing VMMC programs to prioritize men aged 15-29 for accelerated impact in reducing new HIV infections (the “age pivot”).
- In Malawi, a review of 2016 PEPFAR performance data indicated that 51% of VMMC clients in Lilongwe, where VMMC is provided by Jhpiego’s Project IQ, were boys under 15 years.
- New strategies were needed to increase uptake by older males, as monitored through routine performance data.

Methods

- Project IQ adjusted demand creation and service delivery approaches to target men aged 15-29:
  - Employing/training satisfied clients within the priority age group to recruit friends.
  - Mapping communities to identify and reach out where men congregate e.g. market places and “bawo” games.
  - Extending service hours to accommodate working men.
  - Training community leaders and key influencers on VMMC to act as VMMC champions.
  - Enhancing referrals from other service delivery points (e.g. sexually transmitted infections clinic).
  - Conducting campaigns outside school holidays.
  - Instituting weekly dashboard to track performance by age group.
- To evaluate the program’s efforts to target these men, we conducted a descriptive analysis of program data from October 2016 to September 2018.
  - VMMC aggregate program data is collected monthly through partner monitoring and evaluation systems and reported quarterly to PEPFAR.
  - Variables reported include client numbers and ages.

Results

- A total of 93,050 clients were circumcised in Lilongwe between Oct 2016 and Sept 2018.
- In 2016, 44% of the clients who underwent VMMC in Lilongwe were aged 15-29.
- Quarter to quarter variation in age pivot performance was noted, but the same quarter across successive years showed improvement for each quarter (Figure 1).
- An increase in age pivot to 71% was noted in 2017 with further increase to 82% in 2018 (Figure 1 and 2).
- Across all the years, Q4 has a high number of 10-14 year olds because of the school holidays and major campaign period.
- The trend of annual increase in number of VMMC did not affect age pivot (Fig.3).

Conclusions

- Implementing age-targeted demand creation activities effectively improves VMMC uptake among the priority age group.
- Further refinements include expanding community mobilization activities in the targeted locations throughout the year to minimize seasonality.

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