

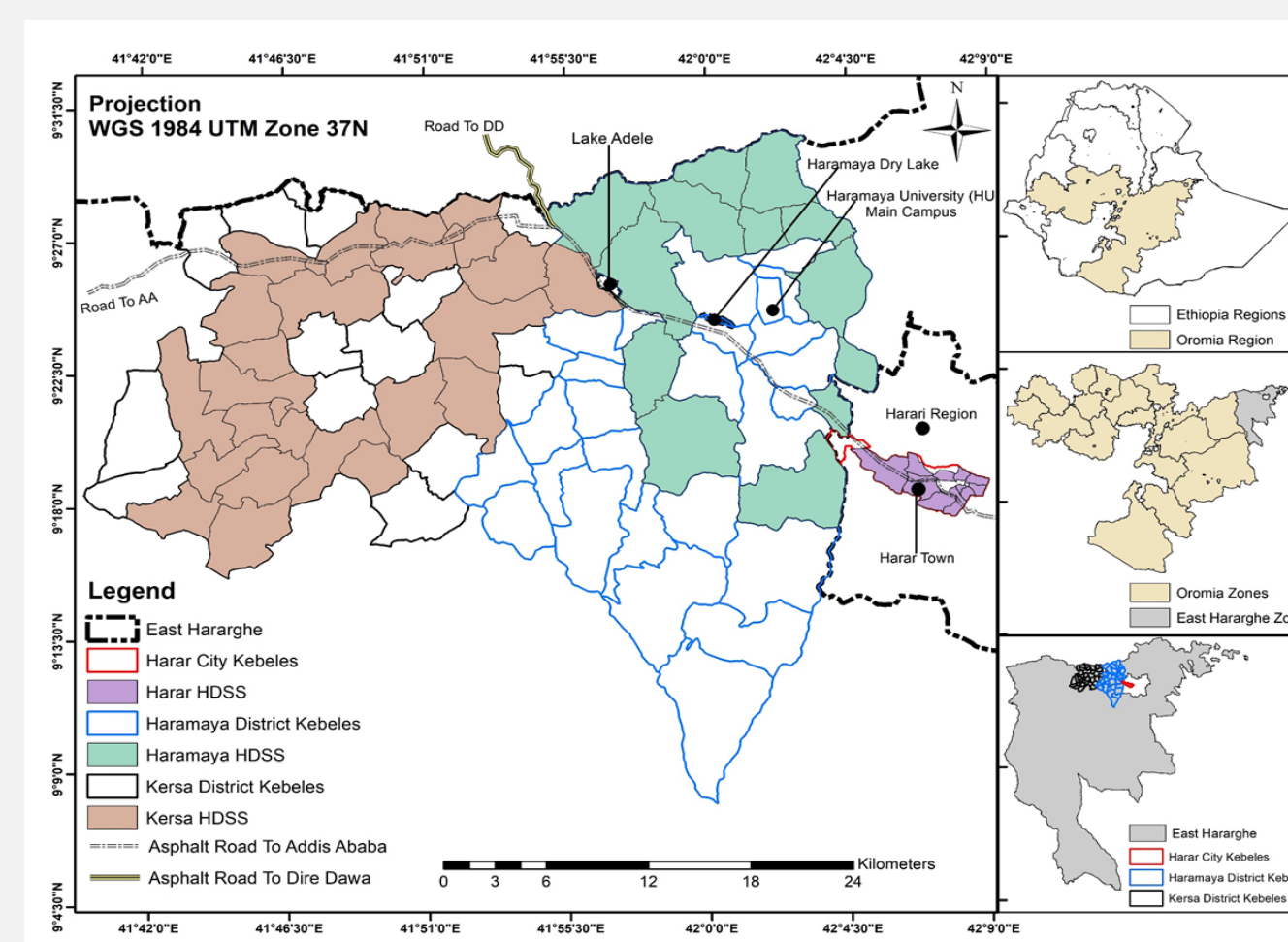
Community engagement to manage rumors in health research: A case from Ethiopia.

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Background

- Ethiopia is one of the countries of high under-five and infant mortality rate (55 and 43 deaths per 1,000 live births).
- CHAMPS is a Program that aims to track definitive causes of child mortality in sites and produce and disseminate high-quality data to inform policy and public health action.
- CHAMPS employs minimally invasive tissue sampling (MITS) to gather small samples of body fluids and tissue from the bodies of children who have died that uses a special instrument with a spring-loaded needle a mechanism to gather the samples without any incisions on the body.
- In Ethiopia, the Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance (CHAMPS) Network is using community engagement as a key tool in the research.
- Developing community engagement strategy is essential to address the rumours in order to stop their spread in health-related projects.



Methods

The study used participatory research approach to explore, manage and respond to existing and-emerging rumors:

- Feedback from radio episodes and community listening group
- Regular meetings with community advisory board (CAB)
- Mass community awareness sessions
- Theatre for development and engaging local actors in script development and performance

Conclusions

- Community engagements contributed to community participation in the research and helped reduce the rumors such as organ stealing and blood extracting conducting MITS.
- Engaging the local community in health research; planning and implementation assisted the team to reduce and manage rumors.
- Platforms such as; radio programs, theatre forums, community gatherings like, 'Iddirs', women's associations, health institutions, religious places, chief of a villages and health extension workers, and women health army group can be used to disseminate information.
- Developing and sustaining activities that demonstrate respect for the community and reflect the communities' priorities will helps to increases the feasibility of carrying out CHAMPS mortality surveillance and increases consent rate. These in turn helped to get trust, and form partnership and to minimize rumors

Results

- CHAMPS Ethiopia activities allow community members to engage directly with CHAMPS's mission and help our teams better understand the culture and context of the demographic surveillance sites.
- The team identified two kinds of rumors : Existing rumours of other projects - rumours that existed-prior to the launch of the program and emerging rumours- rumours that emerged because of the launch of the CHAMPS surveillance . Examples of those rumours are: Collecting dead body, organ stealing and selling, blood suckers and vampires.
- Communication builds mutual understanding and trust. Communication helped the team to carry out the mortality surveillance and reduced the potentiation of rumors impacting the program.
- SBS team are using participatory community theater (TfD) to deliver information about child and maternal health, explain our work and share CHAMPS findings.
- Radio program used to raise awareness about CHAMPS activities and answer frequently asked questions. Moreover, the site has aired more than 70 radio episodes, one of which included interviews with family members who had consented to MITS and communicated the cause her child death.
- The involvement of community members in the research support the team to manage rumors about organ theft and vampires and other suspicions about why CHAMPS is focusing on dead children.



See more data at
champshealth.org



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