



“Where my pocket can afford is where I will take my child”*
The influence of structural factors on the health-seeking behaviour

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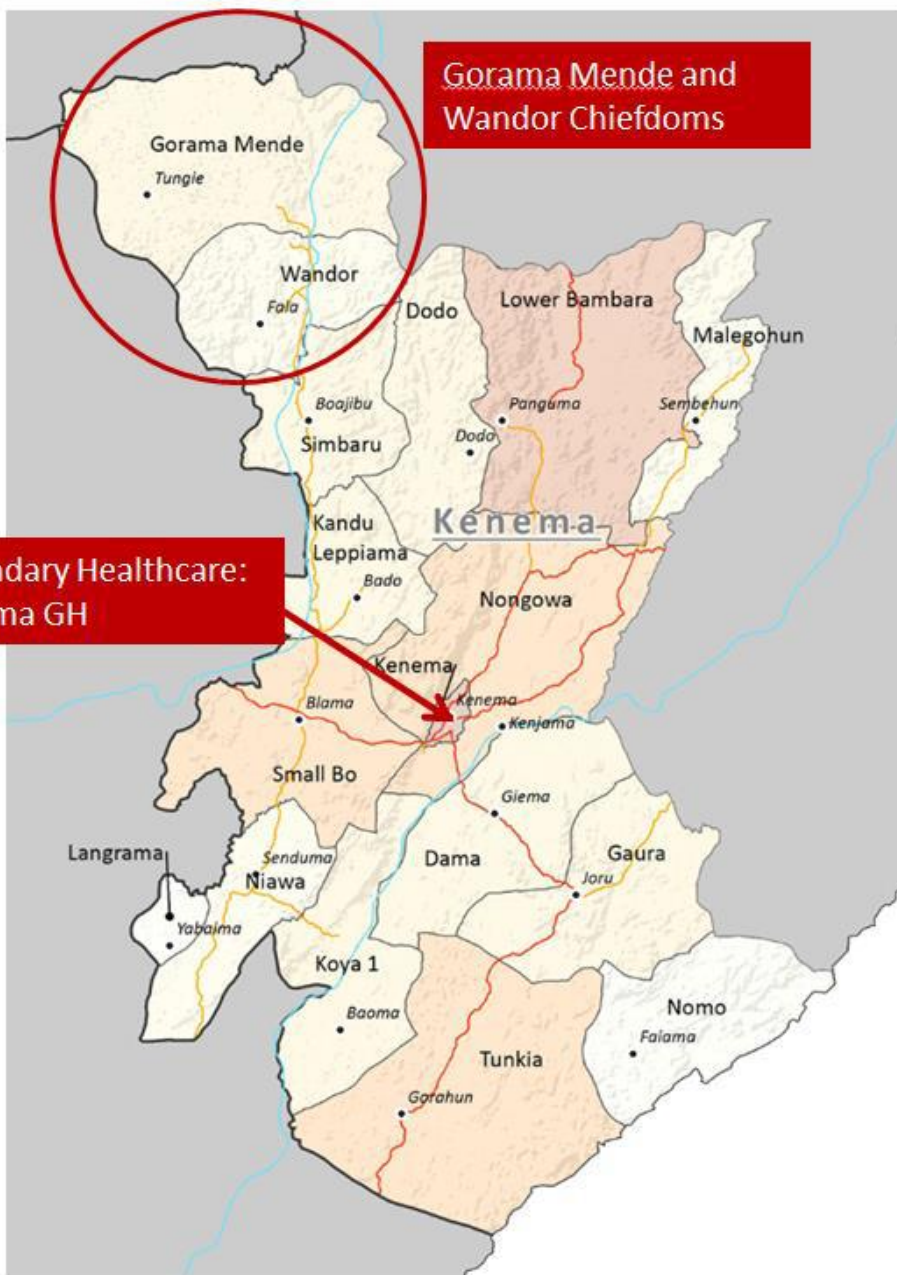
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What was the study about?

What are traditional healers' practices in Gorama Mende and Wandor chiefdoms and how do they influence the general health-seeking behaviour of the GMW population?



Quranic verses wrapped into leather



- Kenema district – 16 chiefdoms
- Far northeast Gorama Mende and Wandor chiefdoms
- Secondary healthcare provider Kenema Government Hospital (KenGH) in Kenema town – referrals (crossing of Sewa river challenging during rainy season)

When did MSF start in GMW?

- MSF started in 2017
- After an initial assessment including an anthropologist
- MSF provides essential drugs, therapeutic food, medical material to gap-fill MoH, capacity building and HP, rehabilitation of health facilities, support for referrals and financial support for volunteer staff



Bamba Kaima PHU, MSF outreach team supporting PHUs

Why was this study done?

- Underuse of peripheral health units (**PHUs**)
- **PHUs** see complicated cases with traditional treatment prior to PHU visit
- Assumption: prior to **PHU** people consult traditional healers



Punduru PHU, health promotion session

How was the study conducted?

- Anthropological study
- Ethical approval from MSF and SL
- Data collection February 2020
- Primary investigator, study assistant, interpreters/transcribers
- 53 interviews
- Thematic analysis, manually and Nvivo©11
- Dissemination: internal and external, publication in [SSM-QRH](#)



Group discussion with mothers, Samaya village

Who participated in the study?

- 43 Women in reproductive age
- 31 Community leaders (all men)
- 10 MoH staff (7 female, 3 male)
- 7 Community health workers (2 female, 5 male)
- 7 TBAs/herbalists
- 5 Traditional healers (1 female, 4 male)
- 4 MSF staff (HP) (2 female, 2 male)
- 3 Drug sellers (all male)



Group discussion with community leaders

Sierra Leone's pluralistic health system

- District hospital (Kenema)
- Peripheral health units (PHU)
- Community health worker (CHW)
- Traditional birth attendants (TBA)
- Traditional healers
- Drug shops and wandering drug sellers/peddlers

Free health care initiative (FHCI) introduced in 2010.



PHU medical consultation, vaccination day

RESULTS: Health-seeking behaviour

- Treatment at home
- CHW
- Drug shop keeper, wandering drug sellers and quack doctors
- Traditional healers and TBAs
- Formal health care sector
- 'referrals' navigating the different healthcare providers



Drug shop at Baama market

RESULTS: Factors influencing health-seeking behaviour

1. **Accessibility** and living in hard-to-reach areas
2. **Affordability** including
 - ‘Unexpected’ payment of services
 - Transportation
3. **Previous healthcare experiences** and reception at the health facility



Road to Gondama village, Ngiiegboya PHU

What have we learned from this study?

- MSF assumption to be examined !
- Healthcare providers felt people go to a healer first
- Users emphasized PHU is preferred



Cooking place in village homes

Recommendations

- Improve healthcare worker's attitude and reception at the PHU
- Advocate for better organisation of healthcare at PHUs
- Improve knowledge of FHCI
- Address structural barriers:
 - Distance
 - Transport
 - Additional payments



Bone fixer applying the splint on a broken tibia

THANK YOU !

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