

THINKING BEYOND THE PRICE TAG:

Opportunities and pitfalls in employing cost-effectiveness analysis for an aspirational ASRH program in three African countries

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BACKGROUND

- Funding for ASRH programs is limited globally, which has been worsened by the economic and COVID-19 pandemic crises.
- Robust analysis are required to compare different strategies and their trade-offs.
- Few programs conduct comprehensive costing analyses.
- Stakeholders have limited information to determine whether and how to replicate promising or proven interventions.

- We describe how Adolescents 360 routinized costing analysis within its own implementation.
- We present the potential pitfalls of focusing on cost-effectiveness in AYSRH programs.

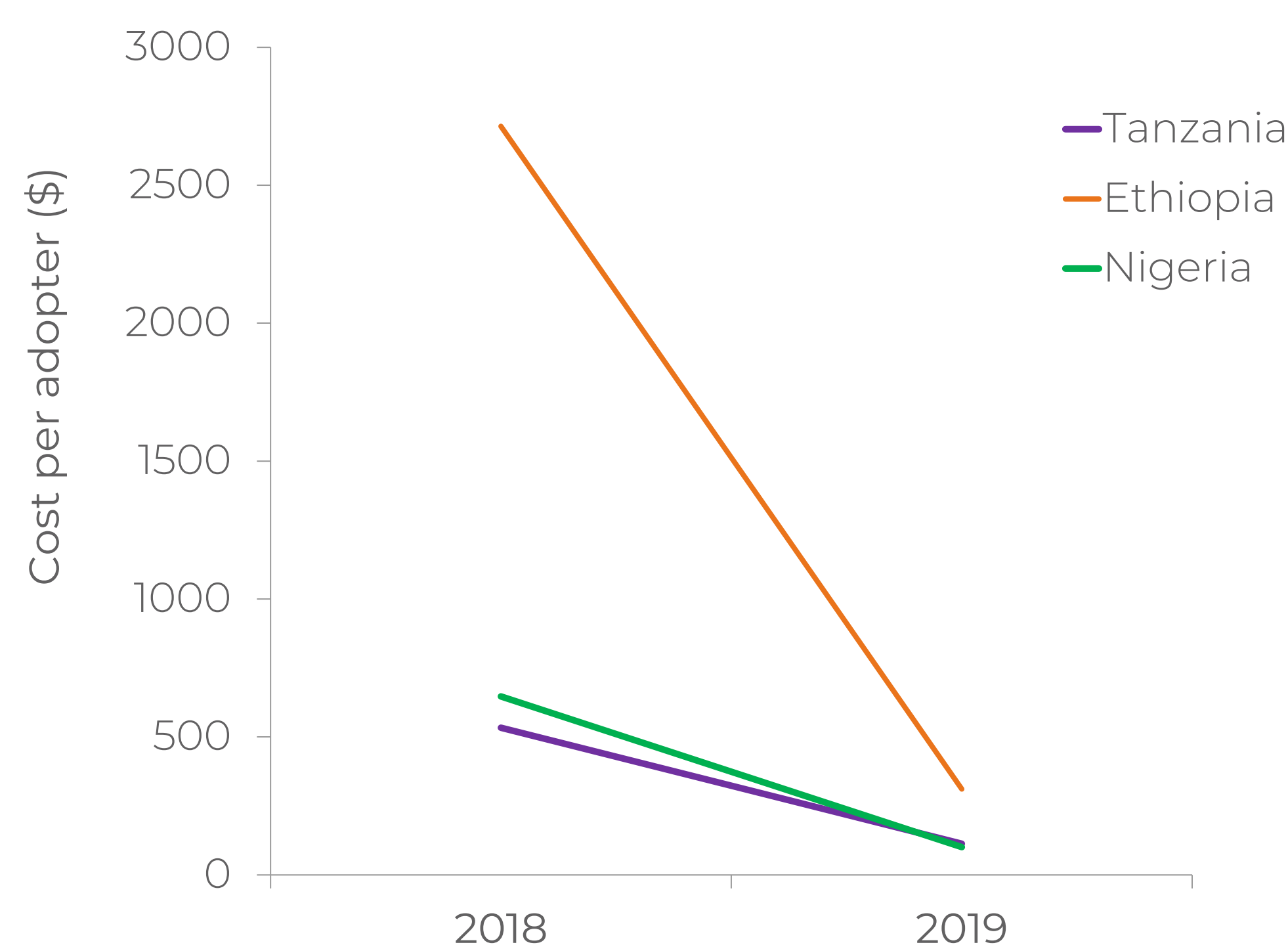
METHODS

3 rounds of data collection were conducted by an external evaluator in outcome evaluation geographies in Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia between 2016 and 2020. A360 conducted additional bi-annual review of program spend against performance.

- Used blended top-down and bottom-up approach.
- Included leveraged costs but excluded end-user or societal-level costs.
- Global costs allocated based on LOE derived through staff surveys. Total implementation costs computed for each intervention.
- Cost per adopter computed by dividing total implementation cost by total number of adopters.
- Bi-annual reviews informed program adaptations and course corrections, which were then re-assessed for cost-efficiencies during the next review cycle.
- Benchmarking was conducted with other AYSRH programs by reviewing publicly available information on cost per key performance indicator.

RESULTS

Fig. 1: Cost per adopter in three countries between 2018 and 2019.



- Cost per adopter decreased between 79-89% across the three countries: Change linked to greater program efficiencies.
- In 2020, adaptations resulted in an average reduction of 36% across interventions, though at a slower pace than previous years.
- Economies of scale resulted to greater reduction (60% for Northern Nigeria with an increase from 1,500 to 7,000 adopters of contraception quarterly).

LESSONS LEARNT



- A360's routine costing analysis incentivized program adaptations and course corrections
- Cost analysis contributed to increased contraceptive uptake resulting to increased efficiencies over time.
- Internal benchmarking using qualitative indicators (beneficiary demographics and method mix) provided a more meaningful comparison than external benchmarking.

"Focus on one metric led to the '**minimum viable product**' which impacted fidelity to the original design and constrained investments in quality"

- Focus on cost per adopter led to de-prioritization of 'essential' intervention components e.g.,
 - Elimination of the Navigator (dedicated mobilizer of adolescent counselor) in Ethiopia.
 - Light-touch branding and integrated service-delivery rooms in Nigeria.
 - Elimination of parent- and girl-clinic days in Tanzania in favor of pop-up, girl-only events
- Costs estimates generated were incomparable to existing cost analysis benchmarks on ASRH which used diverse methodologies to arrive at different results
- Routinising cost analysis required allocation of sufficient resources and building of internal capabilities



CONCLUSION

- Cost analysis helped A360 to determine the value of invested funds and incentivized performance.
- Reasonable benchmarks were lacking yet they could help to compare the intervention against others in terms of the best value for money and on the tradeoffs between cost, scale, quality, impact, and sustainability.
- Using a range of key outcome indicators may be helpful to ensure holistic use of costing analysis and a wider focus on cost-effectiveness at the population-level.
- ASRH sector needs more consistent and high-quality methodologies so that cost analysis is rigorous, and benchmarking is meaningful.

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