
Title : K.E.Y-Knowing and Engaging for Young child food and feeding: Leveraging a successful literacy initiative assessment approach

Author(s) : Karishma Vats, Malavika Subramanyam, Aditi Macwan, Smriti Pahwa

Institution : Social Sector Unit, ASER Centre-Pratham, New delhi, India; Social Epidemiology, Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India;Urban Learning centres, Pratham, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India; Social

Keywords : *young child feeding, literacy, approach*

Introduction:

Pratham is a non government organization working since 1995 to improve education quality in India. ASER is an autonomous wing of Pratham that uses simple yet rigorous methods to generate new evidence for action, disseminate it widely, and build the capacity of individuals and organizations across the country to do the same. Since 2005 ASER has used a simple tool to assess learning levels of around 600,000 rural children annually, through the participation of around 30,000 ordinary citizens. One of ASER centre's recent efforts has been focused on the nutrition, health and overall development in Early Childhood Period. In keeping with ASER philosophy simple measurable-actionable indicators were compiled in formats which enabled the involvement of caregivers in assessing the young child's status and take necessary corrective actions if required.

Methodology:

Local women volunteers of Pratham were trained on the assessment formats which included domains like Young child food and feeding, Diarrhea, Immunization, Growth monitoring and Water, hygiene and sanitation and tool which part from these included information about the members of households and on household indicators. Target sample for pilot selected after cluster census. Information was collected from caregivers of 90 <3 year children from two urban clusters in Ahmedabad (intervention) and Baroda (comparison), Gujarat at baseline. Thirty three weekly home visits and seven monthly meetings were held with the caregivers of young <3 year children during an interval of nine months before the endline assessments were done.

Results:

An increased knowledge about special feeding (improvement in use of GLV's from 5.6 to 47.6% and use of ghee to improve energy density from 4.2 to 54.8%) for young children was observed among sixty mothers in Ahmedabad. Mothers were observed to have an 40% increase in the level of awareness about breastfeeding and its benefits as compared to the baseline. Ahmedabad showed a 23.3 % increase in the knowledge of mothers regarding consistency of food, while in Baroda, most mothers wrongly thought that young children must be fed foods of thin consistency. Self-reported usage of ORS as a treatment measure increased more than 8 times in Ahmedabad (from 8 to 71%), while there was no such practice in Baroda. Feeding difficulties is a very common problem in children with special needs affecting almost 81% children in the above study. Considering the nature of feeding difficulties, a multi-disciplinary approach involving a registered dietitian, doctor, physiotherapist and occupational therapist is required to deal with the feeding difficulties in children with special needs.

Conclusion:

Overall, there was an increase in awareness about health and feeding of children among the intervention group, that is, the Ahmedabad locale. Feeding and hygiene practices as reported by the mothers also showed an improvement for the intervention group as opposed to the control group. Simple methods to assess the status of complementary feeding and identify gaps with respect to guidelines, may be a potential route for converting policy into practice for optimum infant and young child feeding and for other health indicators. By engaging ordinary people to generate evidence and understand the gaps, such assessments have the potential to be used to provide the basis for action at scale as well locally.

References:

- <http://www.pratham.org/about-us/about-pratham>
- <http://www.pratham.org/programmes/aser>