

Building the Capacity of Frontline Workers to Improve IYCF Practices among Marginalized Communities in Odisha

BACKGROUND

Evidence shows that consistent and systematic interpersonal communication (IPC) is critical to changing infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices (UNICEF 2013). Using this evidence, UNICEF designed videos to enhance the capacity of frontline workers to provide correct information and appropriate counseling on IYCF. The assumption is that building the capacity of frontline workers will lead to increased counseling, improved knowledge, and changes in practices among mothers and caregivers.

With the support of five nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UNICEF implemented this intervention in three districts in Odisha with a large population of scheduled castes and tribes who were extremely vulnerable to malnutrition.

APPROACHES AND METHODS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The intervention aimed to build the capacity and skills of frontline workers to interact with and motivate marginalized communities to adopt nutrition and IYCF practices that focused on improving the quantity, quality, and diversity of complementary feeding.

A baseline survey was conducted to observe cultural practices and nutrition-related behaviors among the target communities. Focused

discussions and interviews with *anganwadi* workers (AWWs), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) supervisors, and NGO facilitators highlighted specific challenges.

Using this information, UNICEF developed an entertaining video series titled *Kyunki Ammaji Kehti Hain*, which included 11 videos on maternal nutrition, breastfeeding, and complementary feeding. The videos focused on key messages related to related maternal infant and young child feeding. In a dramatized form, the videos elaborated the wrong practices related to IYCF and called for mothers to take action to improve their IYCF behaviors. The videos were recorded in Odia and formatted to be viewed on television and mobile phones for small-group viewing and home visits.

Facilitators from partner NGOs led a training of ICDS supervisors and AWWs in a three-day workshop on IYCF practices and maternal nutrition, interpersonal communication skills, and the use of videos.

AWWs screened the videos at the village level with support from the facilitators during Village Health and Nutrition Days, village meetings, and routine immunizations sessions. They also uploaded mobile versions of the videos (mobisodes) and showed them during home visits. ICDS supervisors provided supportive supervision during field visits.

UNICEF was responsible for the project's design, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation.

Monthly monitoring meetings, quarterly review meetings with AWWs, and other staff meetings were held to discuss such issues as rescheduling shows during monsoons and resolving technical glitches in handling equipment. Some of these points were shared in district and block interface meetings.

KEY FINDINGS

A total of 2,700 shows were conducted in 240 villages in the three districts. Each video session was attended by about 45–50 women and 10–15 men. Ten shows were held in residential schools for tribal girls to improve awareness among adolescents. Approximately 264,000 people were reached with the videos.

An end-line evaluation was carried out at the end of six months when the project concluded. The efficacy of the intervention was assessed in terms both of satisfaction of end users and families and of changes in knowledge, motivation, and skills of trainers, NGO facilitators, and AWWs in using the communication tools and products. External evaluators observed training sessions; interviewed AWWs, supervisors, and facilitators; and analyzed pre- and post-test results of AWWs to understand the increase in knowledge and communication skills of these frontline workers.

The intervention led to increased confidence among AWWs to share key IYCF messages during counseling, community awareness of IYCF, and community demand for nutrition services. Of 101 AWWs, 98 percent mentioned that they could use all training materials demonstrated in the training. When asked about their views regarding the usefulness of the training, 21 percent said it was very useful, 71 percent said it was useful, and 9 percent did not find it useful (CORT Unpublished).

The in-depth interviews with supervisors and NGO staff show that training was useful to frontline workers as they noted that they felt empowered to explain to villagers and mothers about a particular theme (CORT Unpublished).

Though the intervention lasted only six months, evaluators observed that women had increased awareness of exclusive breastfeeding, timely and appropriate complementary feeding, and demand for regular services from the *anganwadi* center (CORT Unpublished).

CONCLUSION

This effort shows that facilitated video is an effective medium for IYCF messages, and that it is an attractive method for reaching both men and women. The use of video is most successful when those showing it are trained to ensure the adoption of messages for the long term.

REFERENCES

- UNICEF. 2013. *Scoping Study on Communication Practices and Social Engagement across Different Socio-cultural Settings in Select States/Districts*. UNICEF: India.
- CORT (Centre for Operations Research and Training). Unpublished. "End Line Study." Vadodara, India.



Photo © UNICEF

Led by IFPRI

Partnership members:

Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)

One World South Asia

Vikas Samvad

Coalition for Sustainable Nutrition Security in India

Save the Children, India

Public Health Resource Network (PHRN)

Vatsalya

Centre for Equity Studies

WRITTEN BY

Sourav Bhattacharjee, UNICEF

Lopamudra Tripathy, UNICEF

Prajna Choudhury, Directorate of Family Welfare, Odisha

SUGGESTED CITATION

Bhattacharjee S., L. Tripathy, and P. Choudhury. 2015. *Building the Capacity of Frontline Workers to Improve IYCF Practices among Marginalized Communities in Odisha*. POSHAN Implementation Note No. 10. New Delhi: International Food Policy Research Institute.

ABOUT POSHAN

Partnerships and Opportunities to Strengthen and Harmonize Actions for Nutrition in India (POSHAN) is a 4-year initiative that aims to build evidence on effective actions for nutrition and support the use of evidence in decisionmaking. It is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and led by IFPRI in India.

ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION NOTES

Implementation Notes summarize experiences related to how specific interventions or programs are delivered. They are intended to share information on innovations in delivery and are not research products.

CONTACT US

Email us at IFPRI-POSHAN@cgiar.org

IFPRI-NEW DELHI

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

NASC Complex, CG Block,
Dev Prakash Shastri Road,
Pusa, New Delhi 110012, India
T+91.11.2584.6565 to 6567
F+91.11.2584.8008

IFPRI-HEADQUARTERS

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

2033 K Street, NW,
Washington, DC 20006-1002 USA
T. +1.202.862.5600
F. +1.202.467.4439
Skype: IFPRIhomeoffice
ifpri@cgiar.org
www.ifpri.org

This publication has been prepared by POSHAN. It has not been peer reviewed. Any opinions stated herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Copyright © 2015 International Food Policy Research Institute. All rights reserved. For permission to republish, contact ifpri-copyright@cgiar.org.