

## LTP India Meet - 2016

Organised by Bala Mandir Research Foundation - On 9-10 February 2016 - At Palmgrove Hotel, Chennai

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The LTP India meet began with the lighting of lamp and introductory remarks by **Dr. Anandalakshmy, President of Bala Mandir Research Foundation**. She welcomed all participants and guests to the two day conference and thanked UNICEF for extending continuous support to efforts at building a network and to take stock of collective progress.

To highlight the importance of work related to early childhood care, she quoted a Harvard study that was conducted over 70 years. It involved tracking people from their teenage years till old age to find out what makes them happy. While in their teens, people feel it is fame and money, in reality it is the relationships that one has which makes them happy.

In today's context, parents feel that their most important responsibilities towards their children are nutrition, academic achievement, etc. It is very rare for a parent to say that they just want their child to be happy and have good relationships. This is why all interventions related to ECCE must focus on the child's sense of well being and individual development rather than to make children into one herd or a group. That the underlying focus must be the Sense of Self and Relationship is not new, but is certainly worth re-thinking.

In conclusion, Dr. Anandalakshmy said that while we are not short of good ideas, implementation needs to be assessed. The focus of our discussions must be "how will we make this work"

### Overview of ECCE Policy

**Ms. Maya Gaitonde, Secretary of BMRF** also added that theoretically we are sound, implementation of our programs are still a problem. She introduced **Ms. Andal Damodaran**, Vice President of Indian Council for Child Welfare. She has held various positions and has tremendous administrative experience and specific interests include child rights, girl children and child labour. Ms. Damodaran also has a very special relationship with Bala Mandir and was instrumental in bringing the Learning Through Play Calendar to Bala Mandir.

**Ms. Andal Damodaran** began by expressing pleasure at seeing many familiar faces as most of the representatives at the conference have also been part of other forums and platforms. She said that Dr. Anandalakshmy is the Guru of child development for many organisations and that Ms. Maya Gaitonde had taken on "Parenting" as a passion.

The Child Rights Convention views the family as fundamental to the growth of the child, but more and more children are spending much of their time with care givers rather than parents. According to Article 18, the State must render assistance to parents in child rearing, and also recognises the importance of support for working parents. However new

challenges have come up, one of the biggest of which is how to parent adolescents. There has also not been any mechanism for certification and skill development for baby sitters/aayahs. She also said that in parenting the "how" is more important than the "who". The government has stopped the balasevika training that used to be given for crèche workers on parenting, and no relevant alternative has come up.

In January 2016, a new notification has been issued by the government which increases the salary for crèche workers. However, the catch is that 10% of it has to be borne by the NGO. Nevertheless, the salary of Rs.3000 is still too low to attract qualified crèche workers and without training, they lack the required attitude to provide quality care for children.

Critiquing the draft ECCD Policy, she said that while parenting is about nurture, bonding and building relationships, the policy emphasises on school preparedness. Reading and writing is being introduced very early and the goal seems to be more and more on academic achievement. She added that a large number of children who go to private nurseries and children of those who belong to below poverty line families, have different needs and the policy does not specifically address them.

She reiterated the need for training anganwadi workers with important skills such as how to socialise children and build their self esteem. It is important that in these modern times, parents and teachers listen to children and respond supportively, especially as cases of child sexual abuse grow. She also said that workers who care for children with disabilities and special need to be given requisite training.

Speaking about the adoption process, she said most countries require prospective adoptive parents to go through extensive counselling. In Holland, five 2 hour sessions are mandatory. But this is absent in the case of India. She also said that there is a need to be open with the child and accepting of its history. Support systems for adopted children are lacking.

Parenting is an extremely complex issue which needs to evolve with changing social scenarios. Child care is very different in the rural and urban context. In the latter, there is very little community ownership of the child. However, across all classes expectations of academic achievement from the child is increasing. She ended her remarks urging everyone to make recommendations to the government to ensure that ECCE does not become another point of pressure for children.

### **ECCD Policy - Tamil Nadu and Kerala**

**Ms. Aruna Rathnam, UNICEF** has been instrumental in helping to build the Network on Parenting. She has an excellent rapport with government; she knows how they work and how to make them work.

Ms. Rathnam began by talking about her experiences in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Both states are very good at implementation of schemes and their first generation service delivery is very good. Both states have good statistical tools to push implementation.

Kerala has 33,000 anganwadis and only 10% of the population of the state is between 0 to 6 years which is evidence of good provisioning. In Tamil Nadu, almost every village has at least one government building. However, the nutrition and feeding program is looked at mostly as a chore. She cited an example of a remote village she went to recently which had no roads but children were still being given eggs. She added that although provisioning is good, if done without a heart, it can really take the joy out of early childhood. Many anganwadi centres are still functioning in rented buildings which is undesirable and there are cases where the centres are not properly designed. The challenge would be to saturate society with early childhood so that all stakeholders, even if they are not parents can feel ownership. It would be a historical moment if governments in the south can actually move beyond just provisioning.

Ms. Rathnam also drew attention to the fact that despite the positives, Tamil Nadu was also known for housing large number of anti child private nurseries. She also said that there were many in the judiciary who lacked understanding. Citing the example of a judge who asked "why does an 18 month old need a playground." In fact most places do not have open spaces or play areas for children. It is only in south Chennai, which is the planned part of the city that every third street has a park. Most of children who come to play are in fact from the slums nearby.

Talking about challenges and reasons for bad implementation of policies, she cited four reasons -

- Expertise is context free. For example, institutional deliveries in the state are nearly a 100%, but breast feeding within one hour is only 42%. The point is women are viewed in a very narrow manner, only meant to be breast feeding. But the more important point is that quality implementation can only be achieved if there is genuine care for human beings.
- Feminisation of expertise is another major issue. When the ECCE policy was issued, many got letters to be a part of the council but since then there has been no communication and no terms of reference. Non traditional actors must be made to participate in early childhood programs. For example - many bad buildings have been constructed using NABARD funds. In one village where there were about 50 girl children in a class, there was only one toilet. This can happen even in today and unless agencies who design and construct spaces are not involved, there will never be better wisdom on design and use of space in a child friendly manner.
- Development of scheme to a program. There are more than 24 directorates which take care of various child development schemes. Government often forgets that policy must be implemented in privately managed institutions as well. An Early Childhood program, not a scheme, is the need of the day.
- Convergence. A social consensus is needed about how valuable children are. Policy must create an environment and enable society to develop children.

Following the introductory speeches, Dr. Anandlakshmy's book "Thinking with the heart" which is a compilation of her writings was released. It is a book that has inspired many.

Dr.Suja Mathew and Prof. Lakshmi handed over copies of Malayalam and Telugu LTP Calendars to BMRF.

### Accepting the Contexts of ECCD

**Ms.Usha Ramakrishnan, Chairman of Vidyasagar** spoke about appreciating the Scientific Context of ECCD. She used videos from the Harvard's Centre for Developing the Child to illustrate the following core concepts -

- How experiences build brain architecture, interconnection and development of neural pathways to develop new knowledge and skills.
- Serve and return - Activation of neurons through interactions and how they help to shape brain circuitry. Memories in the brain get stronger, new pathways get built. Verbal communication is vital to this.
- Toxic stress and how it derails healthy development. While some amount of stress is important, toxic stress means that the body is in a constant state of high alert and sensitivity. It blocks reasoning, learning and thinking. As opposed to this children who grow up in a nurturing, caring and stable environment have much more potential.

She also spoke about how different types of neglect can affect growth. 3-D and 4-D studies of the brain have proven the effects of neglect. Occasional inattention is good for the child, but chronic understimulation, severe neglect in family or institutional settings can affect the child.

Ms.Ramakrishnan also spoke about Resilience as something that has been soaked in our culture. The ability to adapt and accommodate in adverse circumstances.

Using videos, many of these concepts were highlighted to establish the importance of stimulation and care during early childhood.

**Ms.Jaya Krishnaswamy fromt he Maduram Narayan Centre** spoke about the cultural context of ECCE. She said that parenting in India is viewed as a sensitive role where parental influences prevail greatly on the development of the child. Much emphasis has been laid in the traditional child rearing practices, on the importance of physical closeness with the child by the parent and on building social relationships even from the first days of infancy for the child.

The parent's role as a natural teacher, an intimate confidante, and the closest play companion to the child remains uncontested. With a diverse population with assorted religions, political and cultural ideas on child rearing practices factors such as socio economic status, education and individual experiences vary from family to family. Some of them are of eternal value, some blend well with the evidence based scientific practices, some juxtapose as extended practices and some have lost their relevance in today's cultural scenario.

Physical Closeness: Indian mothers spend a lot of time in close physical contact with their young children. From the moment of birth, until the first forty five days are over,

the infant shares the closeness with the mother, cuddled by her and sharing the bed with her and breast fed by her. As the infant grows and the mother needs to take on the responsibilities in the house hold, the infant is laid in a crib swing within eye sight of the mother while she works in the kitchen. The crib is made out of the mother's saree giving a sense of continued closeness to the infant. Indian mothers massage their babies daily using oil and warm water. The bathing ritual is carried out with the infant laid on the stretched legs of the parent. Many observations are possible to be made on the child's sensorial responses and reflexes to the different positioning of the infant while being bathed.

Socialisation -Relationships Songs, storytelling are just one way of talking should be introduced in every activity of the child, where skills in listening, repeating, imitating and communicating with words, gestures, facial expressions, body language emerge.

Learning Through Play- Shape, Size, Colour, Numbers and Words, Traditional games are introduced to the child in the preschool years through play: teaching numbers, sounds, counting, stringing syllables, sequencing ideas and creating situations for learning problem solving skills.

Culturally appropriate meal time practices: in addressing food choices, eating manners, are both subtly and overtly introduced , as also observing cleanliness in toilet practices. However, the flip side of traditional practices are also present -

Discipline Parents taking on the role of a disciplinarian, and enforcing discipline can take many forms, physical punishment in particular or deprivation, as an indirect form of punishment, use of abusive and derogatory term to express anger.

Gender Preference: Many Indian parents prefer male children to female ones. Female foetuses are often aborted and girls are still regarded as less valuable and hence treated indifferently, in some families.

"White " versus "Black": There are strong biases which have been observed in practices regarding appearances particularly that of a girl child -Fair in Complexion (White) versus Dark Complexion ( Black)

Despite these, parenting is a long term commitment which requires the unconditional love given generously by the parent to the "child, through growing years and even into adulthood. It requires enormous patience and emotional balances.

She concluded that parenting roles gets defined when the parents provide options to the child to build the foundation for the essential aspects of the child's personality to develop-self esteem the quality to empathise, and to , enjoy life with the ability to balance the material and the spiritual needs.

**Ms. Maya Gaitonde, Secretary of Bala Mandir Research Foundation** spoke about the parenting context within the ECCE Policy. She said that the most important thing is to remember that the ECCE policy endorses parenting and the parenting context. Further the underlying understanding in terms of parenting is that every child has the right to an informed parent and every parent has right to information about development of their children. Parents must therefore be equipped and empowered to demand services that will support holistic development of their child.

She also asserted the importance of expanding the parenting role beyond the mother to the father, teachers, care givers and the family. Thus the acronym - **Pappa Amma Relatives Elders Neighbours Teachers Society**

The real challenge would be how to reach out to different sections of society. For example - how do we involve the PWD engineer or someone from Nabard in parenting and appreciation of early childhood care. How do we interact with Self Help Groups as "mothers, grandmothers, aunts or relatives". She also spoke about the addition of E to SPRUCE, i.e the importance of and sensitivity to environment and how the Learning Through Play Calendar has been used keeping this in mind.

While the anganwadi centre is important, the child spends all its time before and after with the family at home. It is therefore important for the family to be empowered and to take power away from the professional, into their own hands to decide what is best for the child. This includes importance of recognition of abilities of children with disabilities and the need for an inclusive policy.

She stressed on the need for family based and community based interventions in early childhood which would keep in mind differences in circumstances. The LTP Calendar is available in 9 languages and along with it tools like the Child Assessment Profile which tracks development domains of children have been developed.

The moderator, Ms.Sharadha summed up important points made by each of the speakers and thanked them for their presentations.

### **Discussion**

Ms.Lakshmi Nair shared a personal anecdote to highlight the importance of stimulation. She said that at a recent 4d scan for her daughter, the baby was found to be sleeping. When the doctor suggested that the elder son come in and speak to the baby, the baby responded and moved immediately. This is proof of intra-uterine stimulation.

Ms.Saraswathi also said that for early detection of hearing loss, pregnant mothers are asked to talk to the child in the womb to see if it responds.

Dr.Anandalakshmy who has helped design the curriculum for early childhood course said that almost a third of the syllabus focus on 0-3 years, highlighting the importance of this phase.

## **Parenting in ECCD**

During this session heads of different organisations presented parenting related work undertaken by them.

### **Ms.Lakshmi Nair from Suraksha, Nagercoil**

She introduced the participants to her organisation. The Suraksha Community Centre has been working in Kanyakumari district for more than three decades. They have recently partnered with the Directorate of Public Health Services to conduct mobile medical outreach to 62 tribal villages. In 2005, the LTPC and Parenting work was introduced into all programs. The calendar was used to engage with parents in crèches and AWCs as well as during the medical outreach. A counsellor has been appointed to look into medical issues for ante natal and pre natal mothers in tribal areas. The calendar is being used to give parenting messages. Suraksha also runs 6 balwadis in rural areas with 45 children in each crèche. The crèche teachers have been trained and several of Balamandir's toys are being used. They also run a family counselling centre and a short stay home.

Between 2009-2011, the tracer study was undertaken in Thatchamalai, a tribal area and Pothiyadi. The intervention was particularly useful in the tribal area as the ICDS centre was not being used. The number of children going to balwadis considerably increased. In 2012, the parenting messages from the UNICEF booklet was used in all the crèches and parents groups have been formed. Child Assessment Profiles are being maintained for 180 children. The challenge has been reaching out to tribal hamlets as the houses are dispersed.

There have been many positive results. These include positive impact on parents who are now receptive to new parenting ideas. All of Suraksha's balwadis comply with the government's new guidelines. A proposal has been made to the Directorate of Public Health Services to introduce ECCD in all the 67 tribal areas. 36 AHSA workers will be trained in partnership with BMRF to use the Learning through Play Calendar and talk to parents during the course of their work which will be supervised by a social worker. Suraksha has also been doing awareness on "parenting" among college students.

### **Susan Thomas - SEWA, Gujarat**

She outlined the main goals of SEWA which is "women's full employment" and "rights of women workers" particularly in the informal sector where there is no security of employment and therefore income. SEWA began 40 years ago as a union of women workers and later a bank was also started in order to promote small savings among women. SEWA's founder Ila Bhatt believed that it was vital to run child care centres and the first few were set up as cooperatives so that women take ownership. Over the years, as the ICDS centres started functioning better, many of the centres were closed.

Ms.Thomas also said that there is definitely a direct relation to child care services to increase in income and therefore betterment of the family as a whole. For a long time, engaging with parents was always a challenge. However, with introduction of the Learning Through Play Calendar, fathers are getting involved. Many programs are held at the community level, adolescents are also involved. Some of the lessons learnt are that child

care is essential for full employment and self reliance; it must therefore be the right of every woman worker. The centres must function from 9am to 5pm. The centres are a good entry point to the community and fathers are also encouraged to share responsibilities through this process. Since the balwadi teachers come from the same community as the mothers, they are more trusted.

### **Accommodating the ECCD Policy - Facilitating Changes - State Presentations..**

Ms. Rama Narayanan moderated the discussion on the ECCD Policy and began by laying out some key questions. The ECCD Policy is to be a universally operationalised child care policy, however in the recent years there have been budget cuts for the ICDS. How then does the government perceive this program?? Moreover, the existing ICDS centres function as nutrition providers rather than enable holistic development. ECCD is critical in that it provides a continuum of service as opposed to private kindergarten. The maatru committee only reinforce the stereotype that women must be the primary care givers. She encouraged the participants to critically address the policy from this context.

### **Ms.Minaxi Suktha - Centre for Health Education Training and Nutrition Awareness**

Chetna works as a support centre to NGOs and government to work with children, adolescents and women. The organisation is involved in networking and dissemination of information as well as demystifying policy and advocacy. Ms.Shukla laid out a picture of the ICDS in Gujarat which began in the Chota Udaipur tribal district in 1975. Beneficiaries include adolescent girls, pregnant women, nursing mothers and children below the age of 6 years. 336 blocks in 36 districts are covered of which 80 blocks are tribal areas, 23 are urban and the rest are rural. Of the 52137 anganwadi centres, 52043 are operational.

A list of provisions for training include

- Induction Training (on initial engagement/appointment) mainly to AWWs
- Job/Orientation Training (once during service period)
- Refresher Training (in-service, once in every two years)
- Training of Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) by NIPCCD (Delhi or Indore). Training of Supervisors is organized by NIPCCD through selected organizations/State Training Institutes called the Middle Level Training Centres (MLTC).
- For regular trainings of AWW and AWHs there are Anganwadi Workers Training Centres (AWTCs) established in the States.
- Also, specific need based training programs are organized under the 'Other Trainings' component of STRAP (State Training Action Plan), whereby the States/UTs are given flexibility to identify state specific problems that need specialized issue based training and take up such training activities.
- Women & Child Development Department (WCD) has selected NGOs and other institutions like Home Science College to impart training on an on-going basis to ICDS functionaries.

She added that nutrition is in a bad state - almost every second child is malnourished. ECCE is still viewed only as a feeding centre and for primary school readiness. In many cases, since siblings need to care for younger children, girl children drop out. Many of the anganwadi centres are located in the primary school premises.

The Chief Minister Anandi ben took on a 100 days goal to do away with malnutrition. At the taluk level Child Malnutrition Treatment Centres have been started when food is given and the mother is also counselled. The ICDS centres refer malnourished children to these centres.

There are however gaps which are lack of community involvement, no proper infrastructure and lack of focus on early childhood in particular. The CAG report in 2013 pointed out that there are 34.28 lakh children registered in the anganwadi centres, only about 26.94 lakh children are registered in primary schools.

She went on to talk about Chetna's work in eight districts which involves improvement in access to health and nutrition, capacity building of service providers.

#### **Prof. Lakshmi, State Resource Centre - Andhra Mahila Sabha**

Prof Lakshmi spoke about the history of the Andhra Mahila Sabha as a vision of its founder Dr. Durgabhai Deshmukh to empower women and had also sought to create quality child care services. Work related to preparing women for parenting began in the 1990s with support from UNICEF through which the organisation was able to reach many ICDS centres. While there is a lot of commitment and good policies on paper, there is still a long way to go in implementation.

The LTP Calendar has been successfully used in training, however there is a lot more sensitisation needed on early childhood. Programs on training on ECCE must be joint training programs for school teachers, anganwadi teachers and primary school teachers so that the gap is bridged. There must also be a more systematic way of providing materials.

She concluded that the policy must enforce an implementation mechanism and must look into the future to equip children with coping skills.

#### **Ms. Nalini Chungani - Association for Early Childhood Education and Development, Mumbai.**

She spoke about the history of the organisation which began in 1965 as the Indian Association of Pre School Education which served as a forum for teachers, as there were no training centres at that time. The forum later evolved into its present form in 2005, a network for parenting and not just for capacity building. It is a membership based organisation which trains private school teachers. In 2010-11, they were trained by BMRF on the Learning Through Play. In order to implement this, they tried to send a circular to parents to come for session in small groups, but this was not possible. Instead large groups of parents were addressed. The sessions included brainstorming on what children need and discussions on the various pictures in the LTP Calendar. Sense of Self, Physical

development, Understanding and Communication were discussed and stimulation for each of these domains was also shared. The emphasis was always on building a strong relationship with the child.

Two NGOs conducted an impact study of their work involving engaging parents of children in anganwadi centres. These children were much more attentive and performed better. Moreover the parents and the community felt an ownership of the anganwadi. Involving parents in day to day classes to make them aware of what the child is learning and importance of respecting the child as an individual was stressed upon.

### **Mr. Sathish - Child Rights Trust, Karnataka**

Mr. Sathish gave a general picture of the situation in Karnataka. He said that it was mixed bag, with some achievement and some failures. 70% of children are anaemic and only 52% of the children are covered by ICDS centres. Further, only about 34% of mothers breast feed within the first hour. In case of migrant children, i.e children of migrant construction workers, the situation is unknown and probably worse. Within Karnataka, there are also regional disparities. He likened the situation in northern regions to that of the BIMARU states.

As per the findings of a pilot study of UNICEF, most of the anganwadi centres did not know about the ECCE policy. The challenge remains how to take the essence of the policy to the grassroots. Parents were generally less interested when it came to learning about stimulation and psychosocial development, but the trend is slowly changing.

He said that Karnataka has not formed the ECCD council as required by the policy and opined that there must be a clearer consensus on how to build capacity to implement the policy as well as monitor children's development.

Ms. Rama Narayanan summed up important points as follows -

- In terms of implementation - counselling component is completely missing from the policy. There must be a paradigm shift from giving parenting messages to counselling.
- There is a lack of adequate infrastructure to implement the policy.
- Transforming ECCE to a rights based and successful program - how to take its essence to the grass roots.
- Community ownership must be present in order to make it sustainable.
- Lack of tools in terms of assessment.

### **Group Discussions - Assimilating ECCD Policy**

Representatives of various organisation and ECCE practitioners were divided into different groups based on their specific focus areas in order to study the Government of India's Draft Early Childhood Care and Education Policy. Each of the groups presented the following recommendations on the draft Policy.

### Institutional Care - early childhood and adoption

Name	Institution
Ms Leela Natarajan	Bala Mandir Kamraj Trust
Ms. Chitra Krishnan	Bala Mandir Kamraj Trust
Ms. Deepika Kannan	Bala Mandir Research Foundation
Ms.Vijayalakshmi Suresh	Bala Mandir Research Foundation
Ms. Sheela Jayanthi	Karna Prayag

- Implementation mechanisms need more emphasis.
- Recognise role of care givers in institutional settings as 'parents' till the child is placed in adoption. Ensure that care givers are paid decent salaries to ensure quality and sustained service.
- Mechanism for continuous training of care givers especially since there is always some trauma that the children have undergone. Training should be at the entry level as well as on-going.
- Ratio of care giver to children - 1:3 to ensure quality of care.
- Adoption process - CARA is now completely an online process with no human touch. Parents are required to fill in their details online and are provided options. Six children's photos are uploaded and parents can choose. This almost becomes like a market. There is no pre-counselling. Home visits are conducted by social workers but if rejected parents can go on appeal. Policy must ensure that there is mandatory ECCD training for adoptive parents and other stakeholders.
- In take policies in institutions must be streamlined and institution must be seen as the "last resort"

### Children with Special Needs

Name	Institution
Mr. Sathish G.C	Child Rights Trust Bangalore
Ms. Susan Sundara Vadani	Trainer, ICDS
Ms. Saraswathy Narayanaswami	Bala Vidyalaya Chennai,
Ms. Andal Raghavan	Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children
Ms.Jayanthi Narayanan	Vidyasagar,
Dr.Suja.K.Kunnath	National Institute of Speech and Hearing, Trivandrum

At its core, a three tier approach :

Level 1- Identification and intervention - ECCE can play a big role here for which the understanding by parents and the community is vital

Level 2 - Inclusion

**Level 3 - (1%) - partial inclusion - as a matter of mandate should be stressed.**

- Cover development priorities for each substage within the continuum
- Developmentally appropriate pre-school education for 3 to 6 year old
- Structured and planned school readiness component for 5 to 6 year olds.
- All care givers in AWCs, crèches, play groups, pre schools, nurseries, home based workers to be specially trained on early development needs of children with special needs.

**Community Development**

Name	Institution
Sharadha	Treasurer in TINP and ICDS Projects
Lavanya Kesavraj	CCFC
Vasudha Ayengar	CRT Bangalore
Minaxi Shukla	Chetna Ahmedabad
Priya Kulkarni	Swadhar Pune
Saulina Arnold	Trainer, MSW - Chennai
Punitha Ramalingam	Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust
Rama Narayanan	Nutritionist / Bala Mandir Research Foundation
Shankar	DEEPS
Annadurai	CCFC

- Health Day celebrated at the ICDS centres every month must be used to train and counsel the community on parenting.
- Change the mother's committee to parents' committee.
- Address the needs of pre-primary classes in private schools.
- Need to include NGO representatives in committees.
- Capacity building of ICDS workers must be continuous and strengthened.
- Include counselling on parenting in other institutions like hospitals.
- Anganwadi workers over burdened and low paid. Very less motivation and quality of care. Need to ensure that their duties are clearly spelt out.

**Urban Creches**

Name	Institution
Lakshmi Gopal	Bala Mandir Research Foundation
Shruti Purandare	Tara Mobile Creches Pune
Susan Thomas	SEWA Ahmedabad
M.Ragini Devi	ICDS Tamil Nadu
J.John Prem	Saint Gobain
C.Anbarasu	Michelin Tyres

- Emphasis on and definition of working parent in the policy is needed.
- Training for parents and care givers on age appropriate needs.
- Monitoring of quality standards needs to be more refined.
- Some definitions need to be clearer for example, early stimulation.

- Mechanisms for early detection of disabilities need to be defined and implemented. This must include special educators and counsellors.
- Regular supply of materials - frequency needs to be clearly spelt out.
- Evaluation - should be periodic either once in 3 months or once in 6 months, evaluation should be participatory, greater transparency - information regarding evaluation needs to be made public.
- Corporate participation
- Recognition of best practice

### Tribal Children

Name	Institution
Usha Ramakrishnan	Vidyasagar, Chennai
S. Joseph Stalin	Rural Development Council Krishnagiri,
Lakshmi Nair	Nagercoil
T. Shiva Moorthy	ARCORD, Krishnagiri
C. Srikanth	ACCORD Gudalur
Jaya Krishnaswamy	Maduram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children Chennai

- Contextualising program and making the system more inclusive - use of native languages and dialect, train and enable community members to have a role in programmes.
- Problem of access needs to be addressed - NGO initiative with participation by community, with government involvement/support, appoint escorts who will accompany children to the centres - because of the spread of habitations in the area.
- Incorporate local knowledge into the curriculum.
- Appoint AWW with knowledge of the local language - vital for any ECCD programme.

### Training on ECCE

Name	Institution
Prof. K. Lakshmi	State Resource Centre - Andhra Mahila Sabha, Hyderabad,
Prema Daniel	Parent Teacher's Association, Chennai
Pranitha Madkaikar	Tara Mobile Creches, Pune
Nalini Chugani	AECEED Mumbai
Sumathi Sudhakar	Program Director Shriram Foundations.
J.M. Yamuna	ICDS, Chennai

- Training must be done at three levels - Policy makers and management; training of trainers; training of field level functionaries at ICDS centres, crèches, day care centres
- Uniform curriculum for training across the country, certain broad non-negotiable guidelines.

- Ensure some room for flexibility of curriculum.
- Continuous professional development.
- Training institutions - registration, affiliation and accreditation, monitoring.
- Assessment of training
- Convergence of different government authorities and stakeholders - a long standing demand.

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### Day 2 - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015

The day began with a parenting game conducted by Bala Mandir's trainer Ms.Lakshmi Gopal. Several parenting situations were written on chits and each participant picked one chit and shared in one line how they would respond to the situation. For example when the child is refusing to switch off the tv, one of the solutions offered was to distract the child by engaging him/her with something as interesting. Some of the situations elicited humorous responses like the participant who said that she would take her child to the swimming pool if she refuses to take a bath. The game was a great way of engaging participants on parenting and can be used to demonstrate how to deal with problems in positive ways. '

#### Parenting in ECCD (continued from previous)

Presentations resumed from each of the organisations.

#### **Dr.Suja Mathew - National Institute of Speech and Hearing, Trivandrum**

Dr.Suja introduced NISH as a resource centre for children and persons with disabilities. Many community projects are also being undertaken and currently a government project for early identification of hearing impairment in young children. The institute has trained nurses at the district level to identify hearing impairment using instruments but the maintenance of these are a problem, as is continuous training. Some schemes like the ADIP and Cochlear Implant Project helped to distribute hearing aids free of cost.

She spoke about a three tiered approach, of which ECCE is an important component. Parents must be helped to accept the child and suspected cases must be brought for intervention. At this stage, the LTP Calendar can be used to demonstrate various development domains (SPRUC) and counsel parents.

A study conducted to assess awareness on child development among mothers who have completed their graduation revealed unfavourable results. It is therefore important to ensure that parents are involved in all activities and that parents become co-therapists.

#### **Ms.Vasudha Iyengar - Saranga Trust, Bangalore**

Several projects on ECCD have been conducted in partnership with Bala Mandir Research Foundation. Saranga Trust has functioned as master trainer of the LTP program and conducted workshops for many NGO staff, field workers, health workers including for

ANMs and ASHA workers in Karnataka so that they reach the community. Some of these NGOs like APD, APSA and Holy Cross are still very active in taking parenting messages in their areas of work.

A LTP-Parenting Project was implemented in Jakkur village with a local NGO for two years during which young parents, school teachers and families were engaged on parenting and early childhood through home visits, street plays, etc. Another project was implemented in primary school level in two big slums in Malleswaram and Sriramapura. The LTPC was used as a tool to engage with parents of students in government schools. Another project in the same year was carried out in Gorur, Hassan district where 22 third year sociology students were trained on importance of ECCD using the LTPC. The students also adopted a village nearby and were able to provide parenting inputs.

25-30 young working girls from an organisation called APSA were trained for a year on sex education, life skills and they were introduced to parenting through LTPC. Rescued child workers in Holy Cross were also trained. As part of BMRF Child Fund Project, Saranga Trust served as one of the master trainers during the 6 day training program on the LTPC. Later, a Tracer Study where LTPC was the main tool to spread parenting messages 25-30 villages in Kolar and Tumkur were covered.

Ms.Vasudha said that Saranga has been regularly conducting workshops and training on LTPC through NIPCID for Community Development Project Officers and Zonal Officers within the government.

#### **Ms. Nalini Chugani, Mumbai Mobile Creches**

The organisation started in 1973. There are almost 1 lakh migrant children who come and go from the city. Some stay for months and other for years or even permanently. The organisation runs crèches for 0-3 years, balwadi for children between 3- 6 years and after school program for 6-14 years. Parenting has been integrated into all of the work including the balsevika trainings and at the chai-pani meetings which involve community outreach. The flash cards developed on the basis of the LTP are used to talk to parents at the construction sites. Informal messages are given to mother when they come to pick up the children. She also spoke about the DEAR Program ( Drop Everything and Read) where mothers who are domestic workers or construction workers are encouraged to read books to their children. During the One Year Teacher Training Program, LTPC is used widely/

#### **Srikanth Chakraborti , ACCORD, Gudalur**

He said that ACCORD has grown out of adivasi movement for land rights. The Vishwa Bharati Vidyodaya Trust was established in 1993 which runs school and hospital for the tribal population in Gudalur. The organisation has facilitated the adivasi population to enrol in formal education at all levels, but ensured that they enter into the mainstream

with dignity and on their own terms. Existing government tribal schools do not have trained teachers.

The organisation helped to train 10<sup>th</sup> standard drop out students to assist in classes. Challenges have been to ensure that there no competitive or individualistic attitude.

In 2011, ACCORD carried out an intervention on parenting in ten tribal villages. Ms. Maya Gaitonde added that ACCORD's work has greatly influenced BMRF's understanding especially in terms of the E in SPRUCE. The sensitivity to environment or context in which the work is being carried out is of utmost importance. It is important to translate the LTFC in tribal dialects as well.

**Ms. Rajul Padmanabhan, Vidyasagar, Chennai**

The Adapted Learning Through Play Calendar has been used widely and creatively for teachers, training parents, M.Phil students, etc. The most exciting thing about the calendar is that it is more lateral than vertical and it therefore fits very well into Vidyasagar's mission statement to work with children with disabilities. The calendar focuses on empowering the family and the community, and demystifies many things enabling parents to focus on the abilities rather than disabilities. Many times the parents are given the calendar so that they can show it to relatives and in laws to understand the child's situation better. While changes in attitude may not be dramatic, they are definitely positive.

The tamil calendar has been used in community based rehabilitation projects, and community workers are able to use the calendar in creative ways. These need to be recorded. She also added that the calendar has been a useful resource and a screening tool to assess development domains. After initial screening it can also be used at the assessment stage and it is functional because it stresses on "communication" rather than "talking".

Ms. Usha Ramakrishan said that the calendar has been used in Africa and South America where instances of disability is higher and there is a lot of thinking has gone into inclusive education. The ADLTPC also aims to make parents the expert rather than the professional. Using documentation and assessment tools like the quadrant and the oval which have been specifically developed for this purpose, the process is much more parent and child friendly.

Lavanya from CCFC added that Hinks Dellcrest has acknowledged that BMRF in India has acquired a great deal of expertise in the use of the LTFC.

**Ms. Lakshmi Gopal, Balamandir Research Foundation, Chennai**

Bala Mandir has been using the LTFC in various ways. The day care centre which has about 200 children and regular parents meetings are conducted for toddlers, LKG and UKG sections. Home visits and PRIDE sessions are also used to give inputs on parenting.

Several workshops have been held over the years using the LTFC and flash cards including for 60 employees in Saint Gobain, Shriram Foundation and others.

In partnership with ICCW, BMRF conducted an early intervention program covering more than 200 children below the age of 6 in 25 slums. Health and nutrition related messages were also given.

She said that the main goal of Bala Mandir's work has been to equip parents with knowledge about holistic development of children and to teach them how to stimulate growth and development during early childhood.

#### **Dr. Andal Raghavan, Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children, Chennai**

MNC's main goal is to facilitate children with development delays and mental retardation toward school education. It serves as an early intervention center and a tool called UPANAYAN has been developed by the institution for assessment and rehabilitation. The Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP) is evolved and implemented age appropriately. Development domains have been categorized as Motor, Self help, Language, Cognition and Socialization for birth to 2 years. For older children, there are a total of 12 domains. Parents are seen as co-facilitators and partners in the entire process. Several training programs are conducted, including use of the LTFC, to empower parents to become fully involved in the child's development. They are encouraged to share their experiences with other parents and to help other children as well. Workshops on positive parenting practices are also taken by experts.

#### **Ms. Pranitha, Tara Mobile Creches, Pune**

Ms. Pranitha spoke about history of engagement of Tara Mobile Creches with parenting related work. In 2004, Tara Mobile Creches was one of three or four organisations trained by BMRF. Many were trained to become master trainers and between 2004-2009, home visits were carried out and the training was used in a big way. In 2009, after a change of management within the organisation, the parenting program suffered. In 2014, a one day refresher course was conducted, but many of the staff who had attended the training earlier had in fact left. The community interaction became more about health, and narrow in focus. The interaction became more about "doing" and "instructing". The essence of the sensitivity required to carry out parenting interventions was lost.

In order to revive it, between 2014-2016 monthly programs were conducted for staff on self development and awareness. The focus was to "be" rather than "do". This has led to lot of positive changes in attitude among the staff who are more open and communicative. The positive impact has also resulted in an increased attendance of older children to the crèche.

In 2016-2017, a three year program called SANGOPAN focussed on birth to three years is proposed, in which LTPC and parenting will be an integral part. Staff from four centres will be trained to work with mothers. The sessions will be held in a staggered manner through the year and eventually 18 centres will be covered at the end of the period. The staff will conduct weekly home visits and will help to identify development delays and intervene or conduct referrals as needed.

Dr.Anandalakshmi added that the founder of Tara Mobile Creches came up with the idea after seeing young children of construction workers at the site of the Gandhi Centenary building. She realised the importance of day care centres for children of migrant workers.

**Mr.Shivamurthy, ARCORD, Krishnagiri**

ARCORD is a 28 year old organisation which began in Krishnagiri district to work for women's empowerment. Later the focus shifted to vocational and skill development for youth. In 2006-7, the organisation sought to intervene on quality education and care for children. They worked with school management committees in 60 schools in Thally block as well as several anganwadis. One of the challenges was that since Krishnagiri is a border district, they had to communicate in Tamil, Telugu and Kannada.

In 2011, in partnership with BMRF and with support from UNICEF a parenting project was started. The focus was on strengthening institutional deliveries and ante natal and pre natal care practices. Since much of the work involved dealing with tribal population, it was difficult.

The project was helpful to assess the attitudes of the parents. Through focus group discussions it was found that safety and security of children was a major concern and the primary reason for child marriage. He also expressed hope that UNICEF would continue to support the project.

**Mr.Shankar, DEEPS**

Mr.Shankar said that parenting is not something new, rather it has been an integral part of our culture. For centuries we have been bringing up our children under the care of mother, grandmother and family.

He criticised institutionalisation of children and the functioning of the anganwadi centres. Not only are spaces ill designed and not well equipped, the teachers do not have the right attitude to impart quality care to young children. Parenting is love, the care giver who is over worked and earning a low salary cannot be a substitute and taught to love the children.

He also said that the focus of parenting has become very narrow and questioned for what we think are moulding the children to become and strive for. A study conducted to assess the mental health of children showed that those in anganwadis are worse off.

While many interventions seek to increase institutional deliveries, it may not be practical with so many of them being almost 20kms away. Traditional knowledge of elders in dealing with medical emergencies have been ignored and therefore lost.

**Ms,Prema Daniel , Parents Teachers Associations, Chennai**

Ms.Prema Daniel shared her experiences of using the Learning Through Play Calendar in all the parent interaction be it tsunami affected families or affluent parents, the LTPC has been a useful tool.

Since 2015, she has been the director of the kindergarten section of the Velammal school. All of the schools under her leadership follow a different curriculum with no formal writing, no homework.

Parents are required to attend orientation programs to understand the child's development and to appreciate multiple intelligences, sense of self, behaviour and importance of play in learning. Inputs on health and nutrition as well as school readiness are also given. Children who need special care are counselled and referred to appropriate institutions.

An Early Childhood Education Program is also conducted as a 3 month or 6 month course, and last year 100 parents were trained. The LTP Calendar is used extensively used during the course of training and parents are encouraged to engage in role play and make presentations. Many of the parents have asked for the LTPC in different languages.

Ms.Daniel pointed out the main reasons for the success of the calendar was that it has strong visual appeal and therefore made it easy to identify age appropriate milestones.

**Saraswathi Narayanaswamy, Balavidyala, Chennai**

Introducing her organisation, Ms.Naranaswamy said that the main aim of Bala Vidyalaya was to train and enable children with hearing impairment to acquire age appropriate language and speech. 90% of students are integrated into mainstream schools when they are 5-6 years.

She said that during the course of the school year, there are regular interactions with parents and at end of the year, a longer one on one meeting takes place. Regular workshops are held, for which resource persons are often alumni parents.

DHWANI Language Scheme and kits have been prepared for the parents which includes the LTP Calendar. Each illustrates 300 routine household activities, which are Sequential, Age appropriate, for different economical strata. The kits are given to parents to enable them to participate at every stage in the child's growth and development.

**Yamuna, Deputy Director, Training- ICDS**

Ms.Yamuna gave a detailed presentation on how the ICDS has incorporated the ECCE Policy. She said that while a broad framework has been provided, each state has been

given the freedom to develop its own curriculum. In Tami Nadu, it is called that "Aadi Paadi Vilayaadu Paapa". It has been updated to include development indicators as well as school readiness component. The 19<sup>th</sup> of every month is celebrated as the ECCE day and community workers are involved in the process. A schedule of activities and trainings will be rolled out as the government order has just been issued. She also said that thematic and Montessori elements have been incorporated into the curriculum and there has been a specific focus of psychosocial aspects of the child. The curriculum is subject to revision every 5 years and anganwadi teachers will also be required to be educated and trained periodically.

One of the biggest challenges that needs to be addressed is school readiness. The government has also provided forms for assessment cards, play materials and activity books. She also said that the ECCE council has been formed and broad guidelines have been decided upon.

Third party certification and accreditation with UNICEF, as well as community participation in assessment has been discussed. It was found that of 54,439 centres, 30000 were performing well.

Ms.Gaitonde sought clarification about the curriculum. She said that many of those who were invited to be on the council were at the conference but no meeting has been called for.

Ms.Prema Daniel also wondered why the Education department seeks to regulate kindergarten, if the ICDS is in fact looking into children from 0-6 years old. She said that integration is needed between efforts of various government departments.

Ms.Saulina also said that the curriculum seems very good, but the key to its effective implementation will be training to anganwadi workers.

### **Discussion on Network for Information on Parenting**

Ms.Dhvani Anumolu led the discussion on key administrative issues facing the network. These include registration of network, membership forms, code of conduct that members must adhere to as well the role of the Secretariat. There was a consensus that a code of conduct was important to ensure that there was a broad understanding of ethics among the organisations within the network. It was also decided that state or local chapters could function independently and translate NIP pamphlet. Resource materials can be shared and used but due credit must be given to the organisation to whom the resource belongs to. It was also decided that eventually the network must move beyond early childhood and percolate to all stages of growth.

### **Concluding remarks**

Dr.Anandlakshmi thanked all the participants for a productive conference. She said that NIP must expand to include all aspects of parenting and that there must be a push to educate the media on various issues using television and community radio.