

Children's Lovecastles Trust (CLT)

Abstract

In November 2003, Children's Lovecastles Trust (CLT), in partnership with Bala Mandir Research Foundation (BMRF), launched a pilot, community-based "Joy of Parenting" programme in Jakkur village, Bangalore, Karnataka. The aim of the project was to create awareness on positive parenting practices in the community, with specific emphasis on SPRUC for the child below 6 years. The programme had a successful impact on the local community, as well as on State government agencies.

Introduction

The "Joy of Parenting" programme is a BMRF training module on Parenting for Early Childhood Care and Development, derived from the Hincks-Dellcrest "Learning through Play" Calendar (LTPC). A one-year pilot project was launched in November 2003, in Jakkur, to promote community development and empowerment through positive parenting. Poor parenting practices, arising from changes in the family system, lifestyle, work, and societal pressures have been shown to lead to various problems. Over a period, they seem to result in retarded growth and development of children, lack of creativity and interest, and unemployment and anti-social behaviour in the adults.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Create awareness among men and women in the community on holistic parenting, with a special focus on SPRUC for the child below 6 years, using the LTPC tool.
- Help families to create a congenial atmosphere for children to learn and develop, and reach their full potential.

Based on the outcome of the pilot project, CLT aims to extend the programme to the surrounding ten villages.

Methodology

The project was carried out in five phases, from November 2003 to November 2004.

Phase I - Building Relationships & Training of Trainers

Informal get-togethers were initially arranged for women in the village, to help build relationships, and understand the dynamics of the community, as well as elicit opinions on the project-related issues to be addressed.

Based on a strong response from the community, a three-day "Joy of Parenting" training programme was organised for a core group of women, responsible for

then conducting a baseline household survey, and disseminating parenting messages. The guiding principal for these women and the community was to take ownership of the programme, and be actively involved, rather than merely being made to participate.

Phase II – Baseline Survey

A baseline survey was carried out on 430 households in the village, over a period of 4 months. Five separate survey schedules were prepared to cover stage-wise target groups. The objectives of the survey were to collect baseline information, to understand pre-implementation conditions, identify critical areas/issues to be addressed, and facilitate post-implementation comparison/evaluation. The home survey visits were simultaneously used to disseminate information to parents on effective parenting, and the LTPC (birth to 6 years).

Phase III – Evaluation & Analysis

Households with children below 6 years were separately identified and evaluated. A detailed analysis was done on household demographics, as well as schedule-wise data on pregnant and nursing mothers and children below 6 years.

Phase IV – Dissemination

Selected trainers carried out the next phase of focused information dissemination on parenting to the community, including distribution of the LTPC, (Birth – 3 Years, or 3 – 6 Years), to each household. Quarterly follow-up calls/visits were done to monitor the child's development, and continuously enhance child-care practices.

Phase V – Follow-up

A local paediatrician assisted follow-up efforts by providing screening for specific delays/development, as well as disseminating information on important health factors, such as nutrition, family planning etc. to parents of children below 6 years.

Phase VI – Reporting

A final report was compiled on completion of the "Joy of Parenting" pilot project.

Findings

A detailed analysis was done on household profiles, based on key social, demographic and economic indicators, as well as schedule-wise data on pregnant, and nursing mothers, and children below 6 years.

Key findings:

- The village consists of predominantly middle-class, and lower middle-class families with a high literacy rate.
- There is a strong need for family-centred sanitation, and health education to improve general hygiene habits and practices.
- Only 54% of pregnant women surveyed were aware of family planning. There needs to be greater awareness on family planning options/practices and policies.
- Pregnant and nursing mothers follow a standard diet, with little attention to additional nutritional requirements. These women need to be educated on nutritious foods, as well as healthy cooking and eating practices.
- Most nursing mothers lack awareness on child rearing practices, nutrition for infants, age-wise child development, and developmental milestones, all of which needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

"It takes a village to raise a child". For any community or child development programme to be sustainable, the community that the child lives in has to grow with the child. The "Joy of Parenting" pilot programme has had a successful impact in creating awareness on positive parenting and child development issues, and effecting change. Future plans include extension of the programme into the surrounding ten villages.