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Change in Caregiver Interaction and Early Learning Environment of Children(0-3) Post Community Health Worker(CHW) Mediated Inclusive Early Childhood Development Program(IECD).

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Introduction/rationale: Responsive caregiving is crucial to children's development in 0-3 years. In low resource communities, where risk factors to ECD abound and there is poor access to services, responsive caregiving is often difficult. Interventions that build parental capacities in supporting ECD ensure that the crucial window of opportunity in the early years is not missed. CHWs from local communities with an understanding of the cultural context are great resources for such interventions. Ummeed CDC's Early Childhood Champions(ECC) program trains CHWs from community based organisations(CBO) in implementing IECD program.

Objective: The paper documents changes in caregiver interaction and early learning environments after a yearlong CHW mediated home based intervention with caregivers of 0-3 year olds in rural Maharashtra.

Design/Method: CHWs from partner CBO trained in Ummeed's 16 day IECD modules implemented the program through monthly home visits for one year. Implementation entailed the use of standardized International Guide for Monitoring Child Development(GMCD) to monitor and promote ECD augmented with play and communication strategies.

Women from local selfhelp group with no link to the ECC project collected data from 100 mothers with children 0-18 months, using a multiple choice questionnaire based on the ECD module of UNICEF MICS6. Data was collected at baseline and also after one year of intervention.

Results: Preliminary descriptive statistics from 89 mothers demonstrated: 12% mothers stated no-play with their child at baseline which changed to 100% mothers playing with their children. 96% played at least 1-2 times each day after intervention. At baseline 76% mothers stated having no children's books at home which reduced to 43% after intervention. At baseline 1% of mothers answered affirmative to having 2 children's books and 0% for more than 2 books. Post intervention, 21% reported having 2 books and 19% reported having at least three books. At baseline, 4% mothers reported that children played with homemade toys which jumped to 13% post intervention. At baseline, 1% children had access to either homemade, store bought toys or household objects for play. Post intervention, 29% children had access to all three.

Conclusion: The study validates that training community women in monitoring and promoting ECD through a standardized tool and home based play/communication strategies positively

impacts caregiver interactions and a child's early learning environment, thus supporting each child to reach optimal potential.