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Anganwadi Centres as Early Intervention Sub Centres: Model for Early Inclusion of Children with Developmental Delays

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Background and Purpose: National ECCE Curriculum Framework (2013), states that children with disabilities should have access to mainstream early learning environments such as anganwadis which should have a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting their individual needs however it was found that enrolment of children into anganwadis were negligible due to poor resources. Therefore, this study was designed to evaluate the feasibility of anganwadis as early intervention sub centers for children with developmental delays.

Method: In this study (June 2017 – November 2018), 443 anganwadi workers across 5 districts of rural north Karnataka were trained. Culturally appropriate training was designed to deliver services for children with developmental delays. Training was given to anganwadi workers for a period of 4 days every quarter and follow up training was done every week for a period of one year. Parents/ caregivers were trained every week at the anganwadi centers.

Outcome Indicators: The outcome indicators were identification and inclusion of children with developmental delays, child development and capacity building of the parents and number of anganwadi serving at sub centers. This was measured by number of children enrolled into anganwadi, incremental growth in child's next developmental milestones, and effectiveness of parent learning respectively.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion: 959 children with developmental delays were identified out of which 611 (children above 3 years) were eligible for anganwadis. Of these 93 % children were enrolled in anganwadis and availed either early stimulation activities, medical or surgical intervention, education, social entitlement, nutrition and respite care for parents. Of these children, 62 % achieved their next developmental milestones. 824 parents attended training, out of which 661 parents are actively involved in their child's care and development. 162 anganwadis are serving as early intervention sub centers providing services to children with developmental delays.

Conclusion: This study highlights the role of anganwadis serving as potential early intervention sub centers where children with developmental delays are served at a low cost, rendering it as an effective and sustainable model. Therefore, empowering anganwadi workers and parents would enable greater accessibility and early inclusion of children with developmental delays.