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Co-creating Nutrition Services through Community Managed Nutrition cum Daycare Centers - Fulwari Program from Chhattisgarh state of India

Samir Garg

State Health Resource Center, India

Objectives: Chhattisgarh state in India has high levels of child malnutrition with 53% of under-3 year aged children being reported as stunted. The state has very high levels of poverty and a big share of population does not have access to adequately diverse diets especially for animal-source protein, vegetables, fruits and fat. Shortage of caregiver time and recurrent infections are other key problems. In order to address the above problems, the state initiated a Community managed Nutrition Center intervention called the Fulwari program.

Methods: The program relies on communities coming together to contribute time and physical space for running feeding centers. Groups of caregivers collectively manage the feeding centers. Government funds them through local elected bodies to provide three hot cooked meals daily having adequate calorie density, vegetables and eggs procured locally. Community Health Workers carry out community mobilization and capacity building.

Results: 2839 Nutrition centers are operational covering 41,000 children. Rural communities with high levels of poverty have demonstrated sustained willingness to contribute their time for improved feeding and care of children. Bringing together the children of this age group has helped the reach of health service providers to them. A significant proportion of communities have managed to provide day-care along with feeding. Independent assessments have indicated effectiveness the initiative in improving anthropometric indicators. The initiative is cost-effectiveness and the high level of community involvement has helped in avoiding leakages or corruption.

Conclusion: Community based prevention and management of malnutrition through Caregiver managed Nutrition and Day-care centers can be a viable way of organizing nutrition services for children in poverty-ridden settings. Community Health Workers are effective catalysts for promoting community action on nutrition. Co-creating nutrition services is useful in reducing program costs, eliminating corruption in state-run nutrition programs, delivering with quality and therefore being effective in combating malnutrition.

keywords: Community, Feeding, Co-creation