

## Using Health Promotion Approach for Improving Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD) Practices of Caregivers having Children Under Five Years in a Rural Village Welankulama, Sri Lanka

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Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) practices of children under five years is important as they receive school readiness from family prior to primary education. Change agents can change others' behaviors and this study describes how they are involved in improving ECCD practices among caregivers having children under five years using health promotion approach in a rural village. The study was conducted with 160 participants including children and parents in Welankulama village, Anuradhapura. Members of the Children's society were considered as the change agents and they identified poor ECCD practices among caregivers through observations and key informant interviews. During focus group discussions they identified and prioritized determinants to be low family happiness, children's low foods appetite and poor knowledge of caregivers. Children's society developed structures of innovative tools like 'baby rooms', 'pregnant rooms', 'five sensors stimulation tools' and 'happiness calendar' to address these determinants. The play area where all children gathered was used for collective feeding practices. Data were collected using focus group discussions and the change was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The results showed that the weight of the children increased by 35% (n = 30), ECCD practices among caregivers and knowledge on ECCD practices improved by 38% (n = 80) and 50% (n = 80) from the current situation. There were 03 pregnant rooms, 11 baby rooms, 15 five senses stimulation tools and 12 happiness calendars. Interestingly, happiness of the children improved by 40% (n = 40) and the participation of children for collective feeding practices improved by 56% (n=80). Moreover, interpersonal relationships among children improved. It can be concluded that children are good change agents in improving ECCD practices among caregivers and the health promotion approach is very effective.

**Keywords:** Health promotion approach, ECCD, Change agents