

Simple Assessments to Demystify Complementary Feeding: Leveraging a Successful Literacy Initiative Assessment Approach in Gujarat, India

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Abstract : Age appropriate complementary feeding has been stressed upon for sound young child nutrition and appropriate growth. National Infant and Young Child Feeding guidelines, policies and programs indicate cognizance of the issue taken by the country's government, policy makers and technical experts. However, it is important that ordinary people, the caregivers of young children too understand the importance of appropriate feeding. For this, an interface might be required where ordinary people could participate in assessing the gaps in IYCF as a first step to take subsequent action. In this context an attempt was made to extrapolate a citizen led learning level survey that has been involving around 25000 ordinary citizens to reach out to 600,000 children annually for over a decade in India. Based on this philosophy of involving ordinary people in simple assessments to produce understandable actionable evidence, a rapid diet assessment tool was developed and collected from caregivers of 90 < 3year children from two urban clusters in Ahmedabad and Baroda, Gujarat. Target sample for pilot was selected after cluster census. Around half the mothers reported that they had not yet introduced water or other fluids to their < 6 month babies. However, about a third were already feeding them food other than mother's milk. Although complementary feeding was initiated in almost all (95%) children more than 6 months old, frequency was suboptimal in 60%; in 80% cases no measure was taken to either improve energy or nutrient density; only 33% were fed protective foods; Green Leafy Vegetables consumption was negligible (1.4%). Anganwadi food was not consumed. By engaging ordinary people to generate evidence and understand the gaps, such assessments have the potential to be used to generate useful evidence for action at scale as well as locally.

Keywords : citizen led, grass root engagement, IYCF (Infant and Young Child Feeding), rapid diet assessment, under nutrition

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