

How nutrition education got lost in a large-scale program's kitchen sink approach to improving food and nutrition security: Insights from a process evaluation in Odisha, India

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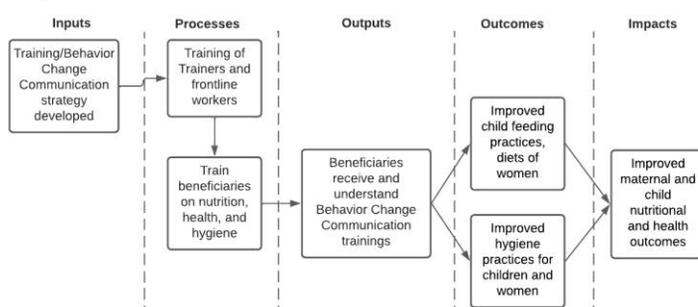
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Introduction

- Food insecurity and chronic malnutrition among women and children remains a devastating problem in India, particularly among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- The Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihoods Program (OPELIP) has the goal of reducing poverty and improving the well-being of 62,356 households through income growth and improved food and nutrition security.
- The program is complex and includes over three dozen interventions, including nutrition education.
- Through a process evaluation, we examined how the nutrition education intervention was implemented in the program.

Methods

Program impact pathway



Qualitative:

- 144 semi-structured interviews with frontline workers, micro-project agency staff, and project management unit staff
- 2 process net-mapping exercises
- 16 focus group discussions



Quantitative

- Knowledge-based questions with 118 frontline workers
 - OPELIP participation data for 962 households
- Extensive review of project documents

Findings and interpretations

- The program had so many interventions, that nutrition education was left behind.
- Program documents lacked detail on the nutrition education intervention.
- The early failure to hire an organization specialized in the Learning by Conservation methodology resulted in nutrition education not being implemented as its own intervention.
- The program management unit decided the only means left to offer nutrition education was through other interventions within OPELIP, such as home gardens, and to partner with an external program.
- Only 19% of frontline workers received funds for conducting training and 29% did not receive any materials for training.



The above pictures show a selection of program interventions. Photos are taken by enumerators in early 2022.

Conclusions

- Programs may find it tempting to include a plethora of interventions to try to encompass the complexity of improving livelihood and food and nutrition security, as well as to utilize a bottom-up approach in program implementation.
- This study found that this approach may not be suitable for interventions, such as nutrition education, that do not reap short-term financial benefits or physical inputs.
- Flexibility and adaptability was key in this program: The program management unit in this program was able to adapt midway in the program and provide nutrition education through other interventions.

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