

FATHERS' ROLE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Research Report

By

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ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a fundamental right of every child. It aims at holistic development of a child which constitutes of physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language and intellectual development. The early development of a child as such, however, does not take place on its own. It requires a deliberate efforts of his/her family members particularly parents. Rearing and caring, nurturing, playing, singing, recreation, learning, healthy habit and nutrition, etc. are some major areas in which the role of parents remains indispensable. The UN Agencies and International Non-Governmental Organizations such as UNICEF and SCI have also maintained the essential roles of parents in the effective implementation of ECD programs in Nepal (UNICEF, 2011; SCI, 2003). In spite of the commitment of these documents it is still not explicitly explored how fathers understand, explain and participate in the ECD practices; and how their participation influences the rearing, caring and development of their children. In this context, National Setogrurans Child Development Services with the support of Save the Children International (SCI) conducted a study entitled “Fathers' Role in ECD”. The purpose of the study was to explore the understandings and perception of fathers towards ECD and their own involvement in it. It also aimed at identifying the major areas of ECD where father can essentially participate and play effective roles for the proper growth and development of children in their early age. The study was conducted in two districts (Siraha and Udaypur). It included 63 children, 60 fathers, 30 mothers and 16 facilitators from 16 different ECD centres.

The study basically followed qualitative research design. However, to some extent it also used quantitative methods. It used interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to collect necessary qualitative data and information. Survey forms were also used to collect the data on social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of children. The quantitative data and information were used to substantiate the qualitative information. The data were discussed, analyzed and interpreted descriptively to draw the results of the study.

The fathers under this study understood ECD in terms of physical (lifting head, crawling, catching things and playing with them), cognitive (matching the time and activities like eating, sleeping, going to ECD centers), early literacy (reading and writing), and formation of habits. The fathers involvement in the early care and development of their children has largely been controlled by a number of factors like socio-cultural tradition, family economy, fathers' occupation, parents role performance in the family, type of the family etc. Fathers included in the study believed that mother's care is more important than the father's care for a child's proper development. They believed that the mother's care includes full of love, affection, comfort, tender, delicate and pleasant, which is more important for a child's development. They also expressed that they do not possess the skills and patience required for the effective care of their children, to the extent, which the child's mother does. They also expressed themselves weaker in comparison to the mothers in terms of establishing deeper level of attachment with children. For these reasons, they believed that their involvement would not keep any visible meaning at the early care and development of their children. Fathers who were involved in manual work and those who held office works on paid salary were not found adequately involved in the activities related to early care and development of their children due to the lack of time available for them.

Thus, the poor, non-poor, rural and urban fathers in the study sites were found to have very little concern for early care and development of child. For some fathers, their involvement in early development of their children is redundant and unproductive. For some others, child care is such an unimportant and negligible part of family activity for which mother at home is sufficient to deal with; and that spending fathers' potential time in the same work is ridiculous. According to some other fathers early development of children is so automatic and casual that there is no need for fathers to make a deliberate plan and put efforts.

The perception of fathers in joint family in this study site was governed by the massive involvement of the other family members in the early care and development of child. A child in joint family has an opportunity to interact, play and work with their siblings, grandparents, uncle and aunts. In such families, grandfathers often were found playing the role of fathers in early care and development of children. In this context, fathers' involvement was not taken-for-granted.

Involvement of fathers in child's health, nutrition, play and recreational activity and also interaction and early stimulation was found somehow superficial. Fathers were found taking their children to hospital in case of severe sickness. They have a strong feeling that the mothers are not good enough for such a task.

The children enjoyed the same food which the adult generally had in the family. Fathers did not show their interest to play with children. But the fathers in urban areas bought readymade play materials for their children and fathers in rural area were found preparing play materials from the locally available materials for their children. Due to the lack of time available for the fathers they were found giving a very little time in interacting with children. In some families interaction with children was not given due importance.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is a fundamental right of children. ECCD influences the holistic development of a child. Holistic development constitutes of physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language and intellectual development (UNESCO, 2008). Physical development again focuses to a balanced growth of a child's physique, i.e. how well the different parts of body of a child function (Brotherson, 2006).

Social development, on the other hand, focuses to improve the social relationship of a child, i.e. how well a particular child adjust and interact with his/her peers family members and the people in his/her contact (Cao, 2006). Emotional development concerns with why children behave the way they do (Ibid). Cognitive, language and intellectual development essentially influence a child's areas of knowledge, skills, attitude, feelings, perceptions etc. Every aspect of a child's development as discussed above is interrelated; and the development of the one deliberately influences the development of the other (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2005). Family is a primary institution and parents are the first immediate companion of a child (Hepburn, 2004). The family environment and parents play incomparably a consistent positive role in the holistic development of a child. Rearing and caring, nurturing, playing, singing, recreation, learning, healthy habit and nutrition etc. are some major areas in which the role of parents remains indispensable.

Despite the indispensability of parents in children's development, father's role is often taken as less significant in the early care, nurturing, learning and recreation of children, which ultimately influences their holistic development. There can be various interpretation of why mother's role takes a lead over fathers' role particularly in making efforts for holistic development of children.

There can be many interpretations for this. Culturally, mother is the most immediate and key person for her child who often thinks her child as an appendage to her life. This view has assigned the responsibility of early care, learning and nurturing of a child to his/her mother. Economically, fathers' involvement in ECD is considered as insignificant and intermittent in providing direct services for ECD of their children. It is, because they are often busy in earning and accumulating wealth for the family and hence they hardly have time to spend with children at home. The social interpretation infers that in male dominated society females are assigned to perform the activities within home environment. Since people think that the early care and development of a child often limits within the home environment, they often don't schedule it under the father's responsibility. These various understandings generally shadowed the active participation of fathers in ECD.

Whatever reasons there might be for the meager participation of father in ECD, it heavily impedes the extensive development of a child in his/her early age. Despite the decades of ECD practices in Nepal, the issue of fathers' participation has hardly been discussed among the ECD stakeholders and there is hardly any research undertaken to explore the situation of fathers' participation in ECD in the context of Nepal.

The organizations such as UNICEF and SCI have focused on the need for comprehensive roles of parents (Fathers and mothers) in the effective implementation of ECD programs in Nepal (UNICEF, 2011; Save the Children, 2003). However, it is still not clearly explored how fathers understand, explain and participate in the ECD programs; and how their participation influences the rearing and caring, and development of children. This research, therefore, has explored the understanding and perception of fathers in ECD practices for their children. It has also tried to find out the nature, type and consequences of their involvement in ECD practices for their children.

Study Problem

The practice of ECD has been the part of family tradition and culture in Nepal. The families in general have their own way of child care and development practices. The traditional way of practicing ECD, however, could not serve children well particularly in their socialization and cognitive development, also in their later schooling as per the demand of the time. As a result, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs and INGOs) in Nepal started to expand the access of ECD services to a larger number of children from early 1960s. Initially, the key focus of their involvement in ECD was to improve primary-school retention and performance. According to DEO (2012), there are altogether 29,273 ECD centers (including both community-based and school-based programs) in Nepal. Similarly, there are 4316 pre-primary ECD classes run by private schools. Thus, in total, there are 33,589 ECD centers currently running in Nepal. These ECD centers are providing their services to children from age 3 to 5 years. Community-based and school based ECD centers are providing their ECD services to 70% children in which 13% children are getting ECD services from institutional schools.

Despite the increasingly improving condition of ECD in Nepal there are some key issues that received very little or no attention by the development agents and organizations working in the field of ECD. First, parenting education as the part of ECD practice constitutes of the participation of both father and mother of a child at early childhood age. But the involvement of fathers in the early care and development of their children is considered highly inadequate compared to the level of involvement of mothers. The most vivid example for this is found in the participation of mothers in meetings and parenting education programs organized by the ECD centers. Second, there is a gap seen between the cultural understanding of ECD and its principles. Culturally, a mother in Nepal is commonly regarded as a primary service provider to

the child of early age, whereas according to the ECD principles both father and mother are crucial for the development of a child. The former minimizes the role of father in ECD but the later seeks the deliberate role of both fathers and mothers in ECD. This gap between the culture and ECD principle raises some important questions such as: How do fathers understand ECD of their child? What space do they see for their involvement in ECD and why? In what form do fathers involve in ECD and why? Which cultural component exactly impedes the fathers' involvement? These are some pertinent questions that remained unexamined in the ECD sector in Nepal. This study was conducted in response to these questions considering the major overarching problem: How do fathers understanding and involvement in ECD influence the practices of early care and development of their children?

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of this study are

1. to explore the understandings of fathers towards ECD,
2. to explain the perception of fathers towards the involvement and participation in ECD, and
3. to identify the major areas of ECD where fathers can essentially participate and play an effective role for the proper growth and development of children in their early age.

Research Questions

1. How do the fathers perceive their involvement in their children's development?
2. How do the fathers involve in ECD?
3. To what extent fathers influence in their children's development?

Importance of the Study

Development of human resource, however, is not an event to accomplish in a single attempt; it is a process that begins right from the conception of a child in his/her mother's womb. A child's development becomes rapid in its early stage particularly from conception to five years of age. A child's holistic development constitutes of his/her physical, social, cognitive, emotional and language development which largely influence their later stages of life. Since national development is dependent upon its better citizens who, in turn, are dependent upon the care and services they receive in their Early Childhood Development (ECD) stage, there is a close and incessant connection between ECD and national development process. In this sense, ECD has been a prime concern of the countries all over the world including Nepal. In the recent years, the government of Nepal has taken keen interest in improving the quality of ECD services in the country.

Many individuals and organizations are involved in the development of ECD in the country. The involvement of parents in ECD is inevitable because the parental care, affection, love and nourishment influence the all-round development of a child. The quality of growth and development of a child solely depends upon the quality of parental service that the child receives at his/her early childhood age. How do parents bring up and educate their child in his/her early age? How much time do the parents spend with their child at home and outside? What strategies do they adopt at home for their child's development in terms of the child's safety, health and nutrition, recreation, games and play etc.? How often do they interact with their child? And how do they react to the child's queries? What facilities do parents provide their child at home for his/her holistic development? These are some pertinent questions for all the individuals and organizations working in the ECD sector of the country. In response to these questions community awareness and parenting education programs were launched in the catchment area of many ECD centers with the support of I/NGOs. This research was, therefore, essential for three main reasons. First, it examined the perception of fathers about their own involvement and participation in ECD. Second, it has collected the fathers' ideas, perceptions, beliefs and values towards their children's rearing and development process. Third, it has identified the activities and performances of fathers that influenced the development process of their children.

These explorations can have multiple usages. It can help all the key stakeholders get familiar with the involvement of fathers in ECD practices. The mothers of ECD age children would benefit themselves by identifying the aspects of ECD in which fathers of their children can play effective role. Fathers can also identify in what ways their perceptions, understanding and involvement in ECD can be supportive. This may help them improve their understandings, perception and values towards their involvement in ECD. It can also help them to be more flexible while selecting their spaces in ECD to ensure their active participation. The study is also expected to help the ECD facilitators to get familiar with the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of the fathers whose children are enrolled in the ECD centers. This information can also help them deal with the fathers to ensure quality environment at home for holistic development of children. It will also help the fathers and mothers develop an understanding between them to co-operate each other in the matter of child rearing and caring practices at home. The study findings are expected to encourage the fathers of ECD age children to participate intentionally and actively in ECD programs. Similarly, this study can help the I/NGOs working in the sector of ECD identify the ECD understandings conceived by the fathers. The I/NGOs can then refine and redefine their plan, strategies and investments for ECD so as to activate the fathers more efficiently and effectively in the ECD programs run by them. The government, on the other hand, will formulate ECD policy making spacious room for the involvement of fathers of the children at ECD centers. Similarly, the study will help the ECD curriculum designers in the way that they would incorporate some prominent activities in ECD curriculum that necessarily demands fathers' involvement for the larger benefits of their children. The findings of the study will help ECD trainers more prominently to understand the primary recipients (particularly fathers) of their trainings which, in turn, will encourage them to design

training packages with rich contents and information so as to motivate and activate the fathers in quality ECD services for their children. Similarly, this study will remain very vital for the sociologists in the way that they will get a clue on how male adult groups in society emotionally, cognitively and economically support the young children. This means that they can precisely explain the social relationship between the male adults and children of early ages.

Chapter II

Methodology

Formation of Advisory Committee

An advisory committee was formed to support the research team in different stages of the research. They suggested the study team about relevant literature. They also advised and instructed for enriching the tools to meet the research purposes. Similarly, they also helped the research team at the stage of data analysis and interpretation. In this way, the advisory committee became crucial from beginning to the end of the research.

Development of the Tools

The research team then developed tools to collect data from the field. Since the objectives and the research questions focused to explore qualitative information, the tools, therefore, consisted of open ended questions to explore perceptions and understanding of the fathers with respect to their involvement in ECD. There were three research questions. The first question tried to explore perception and understanding of fathers towards ECD and their involvement in it. The second question tried to explore the nature and type of ECD activities that they were involve in. The third question tried to explore the outcomes brought due to the involvement of the fathers in early care and development of their children. To explore this information, the research team first breakdown the research questions in different components and sub-components. Based on the literature review they developed some open ended questions to explore required information for each component of the research questions. The tools for the third research questions focused to survey the early development activities in relation to children's physical, social, cognitive and emotional development. For this purpose two types of survey tools were developed: one to explore children's performances at home and the other to explore their performances at ECD centers. The activities and performances under each aspect (physical, emotional, social and cognitive) of early development were noted in statement form to rate them in likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where, 1= very good, 2= good, 3= fair, 4= satisfactory and 5= to be improved). The information obtained from these survey tools were used to substantiate the qualitative information of the study. The questionnaire basically focused to explore perception, understanding and activities of the fathers to explore their involvement in the development of the

children. The survey tools consisted of the activities that the individual child's performance in each aspect of early development (physical, social, emotional and cognitive). Before using these tools in the field the research team presented them to the advisory committee and discussed on each item of the tools. The comments and feedback of the advisory committee were duly taken in to consideration and the tools were revised accordingly.

Study Site and Sampling Procedures

Udayapur and Siraha districts were selected for the research. The two linguistically different communities from the two sample districts were included in the study--one Maithili speaking community (terai) and the other Nepali speaking community (hill). The former community was taken from Siraha district and the later was considered from Udayapur district. Two VDCs and one Municipality from Siraha District and one VDC and one Municipality from Udayapur district were included in the study. In Siraha, six ECD centers from two VDCs and two ECD centers from Municipality were included. Similarly, in Udayapur, three ECD centers from one VDC and five ECD centers from Municipality were selected purposively. The purposive sampling technique was used basically for two reasons. First, ECD centers were selected based on the wider coverage of their service in the rural part of their service. Second, it helped the research team to select potential fathers and key informants to generate information rich cases in the study site. In these all, the researchers took help of the district Setogurans of Udayapur and Siraha and also Bal Bikas Samaj in Udayapur and Bhawani Yekikrit Bikas Kendra in Siraha. The matrix of study site and sampled population is given below:

Districts	VDCs	ECD Centers
Siraha	Fulkahakatti	1) Shree Janaki Bal Bikas Kendra, Fulkahakatti-7, Siraha
		2) Shree Sagermatha Bal Bikas Kendra, Fulkahakatti-8, Jaypur
		3) Shree Saraswati Bal Bikas Kendra, Fulkahakatti-6, Santnagar
		4) Shree Laxmi Shisu Bal Bikas Kendra, Fulkahakatti-6, Santnagar
	Bishnupurkatti	5) Jay Hanuman Bal Bikas Kendra, Bishnupurkatti-7, Siraha
		6) Naba Jyoti Bal Bikas Kendra, Bishnupurkatti-5, Siraha
	Lahan Municipality	7) Seto Gurans Bal Bikas Kendra, Biharpur, Lahan-3
		8) Seto Gurans Bal Bikas Kendra, Singrahi, Lahan-1
Udaypur	Rauta	9) Sunaulo Bal Bikas Kendra, Rauta-9, Udaypur
		10) Prabhat Bal Bikas Kendra, Triyuga municipality-
		11) Rajabas Bal Bikas Kendra, Rauta-9,
		12) Shree Janapremi Reshamlal Permanand Bal Bikas Kendra, Bagha, Triyuga municipality-8
		13) Dahar Bal Bikas Kendra, Rauta-5, Udaypur
		14) Seto Gurans Namuna Bal Bikas Kendra, Bokse, Triyuga municipality-1, Udaypur
		15) Saraswati Bal Bikas Kendra, Jhora, Triyuga municipality-14
		16) Baruwa Bal Bikas Kendra, Bokse, Triyuga municipality-1, Udaypur
		17) Shree Janta Primary School, Jhora-14, Triyuga municipality

Data Collection Procedure

The research team held FGDs with the fathers whose children were enrolled in the ECD centers. But while calling fathers at ECD centers some community members (male and female) also came voluntarily along with the fathers. During FGDs fathers presented their opinions, understanding and practices in relation to their involvement in ECD. Frequently, the community members asserted or challenged the idea of fathers in FGD. Sometimes the fathers in FGD agreed with community members and sometimes they disagreed with them with the arguments in relation to their involvement in early care and development of their children. In the end, the research team summarized the discussion and explained the key ideas generated during FGDs held among the participants to seek their agreement. During the FGDs, the research team identified the potential fathers to be interviewed at their home environment as a part of the home survey. The research team asked such fathers to let the researchers visit their home to collect further data and information. It was observed that as the sampled fathers became so much familiar with the researchers it became very easy for the research team to conduct home survey. During home survey the research team interview the fathers about the home environment and their involvement in supporting their children at home. The research team observed and interviewed the fathers about learning and play materials, safety and health related issues, supplying nutritional food and other necessary services that the child were provided with on daily basis at home. On the whole, the research team assessed the "effective fathering" available to the child at home environment.

The research team also interviewed the facilitators and the members of the management committee of the ECD centers separately regarding the fathers participation in ECD. The research team also observed the minutes of the meeting held with the parents at ECD centers to collect evidences of fathers' participation in children related issue at the ECD centers. Finally, the research team discussed the ideas, perceptions and practices of fathers' involvement in ECD in the research site. They then noted their reflection and conclusion at the end. In this way, the research team met the key informants until all the information were collected.

Informants of the Study

Since the study focused the participation of fathers in ECD, the fathers whose children studied at ECD centers under this research were the primary informants. However, mothers, members of management committee, community members, ECD focal person of DEO, the staffs of the local PNGOs, of the Save the Children International, facilitators of the ECD centers etc. were also the key informants of the research. Ideas, perceptions, understandings and involvement of fathers in ECD were generated directly from the first-hand experience of the fathers included in the study. Then, information obtained from fathers were asserted, refined and substantiated with the information generated from the other key informants. The focal person of ECD at DEO became useful to generate the data regarding the policy and the practices of parents' involvement in the early care and development of their children. The discussion with the staff of the local PNGOs

became useful to assess the spaces of fathers' involvement in the practice of ECD at the research site.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Mainly there were two types of data: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were recorded in the local language in the field. They were transcribed into English. The qualitative data and information were categorized and different themes were developed. The themes were, then, analyzed and interpreted with due support of the theories and relevant research findings. In this way meanings were drawn in the form of findings. The quantitative data were entered into SPSS device and thereby outputs tables were produced as required. These tables were described to substantiate the qualitative information and in drawing the findings of the study.

CHAPTER III

Father's Perception on Early Childhood Development

This chapter discusses, analyzes and interprets the data and information that the study team generated as the part of the first research question, which focuses to explore fathers' understandings about their involvement in ECD. The data as such have been categorized and presented under different themes. The themes, on the other hand, have been presented and discussed in a consecutive order which maintains the knowledge and understanding of the fathers on ECD and their involvement in the care and development of their children.

ECD with Fathers' Perception

Early Childhood Development is the key to a healthy and a successful life for a child. It is a critical stage of development which forms the foundation for children's future well-being and learning (UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/dprk/ecd.pdf>). ECD being such an essential component of life should be a major concern for parents, family, society and the nation as a whole. The stakeholders of ECD in general and parents in particular can make efforts for ECD based on the way they perceive it. For the purpose of this study the study team enquired about fathers' perceptions and their involvement in ECD. For this, the data and information obtained from fathers under this study are presented and discussed as follows:

"I can say that a child develops along with the development of its intellect, which takes place when s/he interacts with family members, friends and facilitators at ECD centers."

-Ramkalebar Singh, 27,
(Non-Dalit, Health worker)

The most focused developmental activity, as expressed by the fathers in FGDs, which takes place at the early age of a child is setting habit for 'reading and writing'. According to them, such development often takes place when a child begins to attend ECD centers. This understanding towards a child development often was found to exist among the fathers from Musahar (Dalits) community. The

"My child can develop only when he starts to read and write. I suppose facilitator's role at ECD center is more essential to make my child knowledgeable. What I can do for him except food to eat and a house to sleep?"

- Ramdhan Sadaya,

fathers from non-Dalit community had different view about ECD.

Some of non-Dalit fathers explained the early development of a child as an uncovering of his/her intellect which, they asserted, would take place when the child play among many children either in the neighborhoods or at the ECD centers.

Some other non-Dalit fathers claimed that a child can't develop if s/he stays at home without attending ECD centers. Still some other fathers viewed that the practice or setting habit of attending ECD centers itself is a development for a child. For some of them, if a child begins to attend ECD centers s/he becomes unhesitant in doing things.

The views on child development differed between the Dalits and non-Dalits fathers in the study sites. The Dalits interpreted ECD as a part of learning to 'read and write' and the non-Dalits took it as the total intellectual development of children. Again, the former asserted ECD centers as a responsible organization working for the desired development of their children while the latter added 'interaction' of children with their family members and friends for their early development.

"A child can't do anything at birth. Slowly, it lifts its head, crawls, walks. It begins to babble and asks for the things of their needs. It also attempts to catch things of their interest and plays with them and so on. This is how a child develops at his/her early age."

-Rameshwor Chaudhari, 34, Farmer

A father in one of the FGDs mentioned that by the age of five years a child's cognitive development takes place to its full potential. According to him, "we put habit (sanskar) and understanding into the mind of the child, it can be taken as development." The term 'sanskar' he means the habit or intention of performing daily

activities such as playing, reading/writing, brushing teeth, asking for food when hungry, able to walk from home to ECD centers etc. By this, he meant that early development of a child can be

"A child develops along with the development of their understanding power. They must match a particular time with a particular activity. Eating, playing, going to ECD center, sleeping etc. are some activities to be correlated with an appropriate time. If a child does this, we can say that the child is developing."

- Prabhu Thakur, 35, a carpenter

"ECD must include *sanskar* which covers the good behaviors to be performed by the child. *Sanskar* also refers to their habit they choose to perform like brushing teeth, concern to maintain cleanliness..."

- Prabhu Thakur, 37, a school teacher

observed in the form of his/her capacity to identify their basic needs. Explaining the development of a child's understanding a father in an interview told that when a child relates particular time with a particular activity, the child is said to have developed in terms of his understanding. In the process of development of his/her understanding power, the child begins to catch pencil and scratch on paper with it. Very few of the fathers spoke about 'all-round development' but they again explained holistic development in terms of walking, talking, reading, writing and asking for the things the child needs. In the same way, some of them (fathers) also told that the child understanding and capacity to repeat story, song, the name of the things around them, lift head, crawl and walk can also be taken as the early development of a child.

ECD refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop his/her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potentials. Community-based services that meet the needs of infants and young children are vital to ECD, and they should include attention to health, nutrition, education and water and environmental sanitation in homes and communities. The approach promotes and protects the right of the young child to survival, growth and development (UNICEF: <http://www.unicef.org/dprk/ecd.pdf>).

The fathers under this study understood ECD in terms of physical (lifting head, crawling, catching things and playing with them), cognitive (matching the time and activities like eating, sleeping, going to ECD centers), early literacy (reading and writing), and formation of habits (*sanskar*). Besides this, some of them made facilitators at ECD centers responsible essentially to contribute to meet these developments but some others asserted that family, friends and community play a vital role in early development of a child. The development of cognitive, emotional, social and physical potentials of children is their inherent right. This right of children can be achieved by formulating and implementing ECD policy and program and also encouraging parents and community for their active participation. But, the fathers under this study perceived ECD as the product of rigorous teaching at ECD centers and, partially, it is the outcome of the child's interaction with their peers and family members.

According to early education literature¹ at the age of 3-5, children have a longer attention span, act silly and boisterous, may use shocking language, talk a lot, ask many questions, want real adult things, keep art projects, test physical skills and courage with caution, reveal feeling in dramatic play, like to play with friends, do not like to lose, share and take turns sometimes. Children at this stage essentially require opportunities to do the things such as develop fine

¹<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCY/EXTECD/0,,contentMDK:20260280~menuPK:524346~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:344939,00.html>

motor skills, continue expanding language skills by talking, reading, and singing, learn cooperation by helping and sharing, experiment with pre-writing and pre-reading skills. They also need opportunities for making choices, engage in dramatic play, read increasingly complex books, sing favorite songs, work simple puzzles. In the context of this study, fathers explained early education only in the form of reading and writing. For them, early education means the training of the child to read a specified book and also to write something. Some other important aspects of ECD such as health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation as discussed in UNESCO (<http://www.unicef.org/dprk/ecd.pdf>) were not incorporated by fathers to explain the meaning and their understanding of ECD.

Fathers' Perspective

After exploration of fathers' understanding towards ECD the study team tried to generate the data on how the fathers perceive their involvement in the ECD practices of their children. This section presents and discusses the data which the study team generated regarding the perception of fathers about their roles and performances in relation to ECD of their children. In this regard, different groups of fathers have presented different opinions. Their opinions were categorized into different sub-themes as given follows:

Fathers' Involvement in Early child rearing practices

"A father can only look after a child when he/she grows up and begins to attend the school. At this time father scolds and makes the child strict so that the child can grow up as an obedient and disciplined person. Early care of the child is the subject to be performed by his/her mother."

- Anup Singh, 31, business person, Fulkahakatti-8, Siraha

Culture is a human institution². A human being is tied with his/her culture and tradition in almost every walk of his/her life and so was the case in the study site among the fathers regarding their involvement in early care and development of their children. The study team found

that the cultural and traditional value system of the society highly influenced the perceptions of fathers in their involvement in ECD related activities. A father in a FGD (in Siraha district) repeatedly mentioned, "Rearing, caring and nurturing of children at their early age is the part of their mothers' responsibility. I, as a father, need to take care of children only when they (children) begin to attend school." This perception strictly limited fathers' scope of involvement in the early care and development of their children. The study team further attempted to enquire about why such perception of fathers governs their involvement in ECD. In reply, one of the fathers in a FGD opined:

² <http://www.hypergeo.eu/spip.php?article354>

A mother gives birth to a child. She is responsible for the child's food, care, cleanliness and his/her proper brought up. She duly massages the child. She tells stories and sings songs for the child when the child cries. She also let the child walk by catching his/her fingers. All these things are to be performed at home environment. Since the mother remains at home almost all the time proper care and development of the child at his/her early age largely falls at the home environment and also in the part of mothers' responsibility.

Any human practice becomes a part of the culture due to the value it deserves in that particular society³. Rearing and caring practices of a child in the society is not a new phenomenon. The history of this practice can go as long back as the ancient human civilization⁴. But, why fathers

do not perceive their involvement in the early care and development of his child as prominent as the mother is an old age issue. The data presented above has given a very subtle clue regarding the limited involvement of fathers in ECD. It has raised some important questions: Who give birth to a child? Why mother is more responsible in the matter of early care and development of a child? Where does the early care and development of a child mostly take place? Who is mostly available to the child at her/his early age?

The field data reveals that rearing, caring and early development of a child are often linked to the question of who gives birth to a child. Biologically, mother bears this responsibility. She then bears many responsibilities that foster proper development of the child in his/her early age. One of the reasons that compel a mother to take the responsibility of early care and development of the child, according to the data as mentioned above, is the immense love and affection; and deeper attachment to the child, which she naturally acquires from the time of pregnancy to the birth of the child⁵. The other

Researcher: who should be responsible regarding the child birth? Father or mother?

Father: Both

Researcher: Why then mother should only be more responsible in the child's ECD? Why not father?

Father: Because mother gives birth to a child?

Researcher: so what?

Father: Mother bears severe pains and sufferings at child's birth. The achievement after a long labour naturally breeds more attachment in mother with the child. The attachment is closely associated with love and affection. The deep love that mother possesses for the child naturally causes her render affection immensely for which the child is in a severe need at his/her early age.

- Sebak Thakur, 28, Farmer

Father's role is minimized in ECD in the family because up to 5 years of age children need more love care affection which is the subject to be performed by mother.

- Sahani Mahato, 28, Farmer

³ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1693428/pdf/15347533.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424300107.html>

⁵ http://www.commonwealthfund.org/usr_doc/ChildDevChartbk.pdf

understanding that minimizes the fathers' involvement in his child's early care and development is related to the place (home) where development takes place and the availability of fathers at the same place (National Scientific Council on Developing Child, 2007).

According to the data given above, the large part of early development of a child takes place at home. The availability of father at home was found limited due to his involvement in outdoor work. Since the mother generally is available at home, the child happens to get his/her needs addressed from the mother alone. The duration and frequency of availability of father remains less than that of the mother in the home environment. As a result, the father involvement in ECD of his child becomes scanty and insignificant. The research team then enquired about the issue of availability of fathers at home and their limited involvement in his child's care and development. A father in a FGD explained, "A family has to perform two types of activities: indoor and outdoor. The indoor activity is performed by mother and the outdoor activity is performed by father. Since child care is one of the indoor activities the mother is responsible for it; not father". He also said that such mutually exclusive role performance in the family is socially acceptable and culturally bound which has been in practice for a long time. It is, thus, needless to question father for his limited involvement in rearing, caring and early development of his child.

The other major understanding which was explored among fathers was the possession of skills required for the early development of a child. In this regard, a father said, "Early care and development require a host of skills such as patience in the part of caregiver to merge personal interest into the interest of the child, Massaging the child, cleaning, feeding, washing baby sheet, singing songs and telling stories for the child are some skills which need both patience and skills to perform. The fathers usually do not have those skills. The fathers, therefore, intentionally keep themselves apart from being involved in the early care and development of the children."

The limited involvement of fathers in ECD shows that they lack awareness and information about the importance of their participation in ECD. The research team enquired whether they understand the need of fatherly care for ECD of their children. One of the fathers interviewed said, "Care is imperative for proper development of a child. But, ancestrally such cares need not to be performed by father; but by mother." Thus, active participation of fathers in the early care and development of their children in the study site has heavily been impeded by the tradition that has been continuing since many years.

The study team found different perceptions among the fathers of different communities. Musahar fathers relate Early Childhood Development with reading, writing and intellectual development of children. According to their views child development can take place only in ECD centers and that the role of facilitators at ECD centers is more essential than that of the parents. Non-Musahar fathers in Siraha did not recognize the importance of deliberate involvement of fathers in ECD. According to their views the male adult (father) has to perform more prominent responsibility in the family than that of the early care and development of the

"I am involving in ECD of my child in the way as my father involved for my ECD and my grandfather involved for my father's ECD. No need to question why my role in ECD of my child is scanty."

- Shiva Yadav, 33, Farmer

child. For them, early care of a child is the matter of mother's responsibility. Asking the fathers to give attention to ECD is waste of time. The daily wage laborers (fathers) in Danuwar family in Udaypur had nothing to say about it. Danuwar mothers said, " Fathers work whole day long and earn money. They spend the money in wine. They are unaware of what they should do and why they should do that for ECD." The fathers from Rai and Tamang family observed the child's socialization process as a part of early development. They claimed that their family environment is liberal in terms of the performance of fathers and mothers in the family. Giving an example of 'Chandi Naach' in Rai community, one of the fathers from Rai family mentioned that just as in Chandi Naach all (young, old, adult, man, woman) participate together, so we participate in the child rearing and caring activities of our children.

Poverty in Family and the Involvement of Father in ECD

Poverty impedes development. It has also appeared as a constraint in the involvement of fathers in ECD. Economists, sociologists, developmental psychologists, and neuroscientists emphasized different pathways by which poverty may influence children's development⁶. Economic models of child development focus on what money can buy. They view families with greater economic resources as being better able to purchase or produce important "inputs" into their young children's development (e.g., nutritious meals; enriched home learning environments and child care settings outside the home; and safe and stimulating neighborhood environments), and higher-quality schools and post-secondary education for older children. The cost of the inputs and family income constraints are therefore the key considerations for understanding poverty's effects on children.

"There are many members in my family. I am only the person to generate income. I work on daily wages. I leave home early in the morning and come back at late night. Whole day long I struggle to earn money. I hardly get any opportunity to care my child at home. If I don't earn money the family won't have anything to survive. In this case who will feed the child and how the child development would take place?"

- Keshab Chaudhari, 29, on-wage worker

Economic realities are one of the basic components of the life of the people of all ages. The children of early age can't be exception to this reality. The child needs to be supplied with basic requirements in course of performing activities for his/her early care and development. Since a child can not fulfill his/her needs by himself/herself, fathers support him/her for his/her early care and development by generating money and supplying with daily basic needs like food and clothes. Money generating activity takes place mostly in outdoor environment particularly in the poor families. Fathers in such families often do not get opportunity to be involved in ECD of his

⁶ http://www.stanford.edu/group/scspi/media/pdf/pathways/winter_2011/PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf

child which takes place at home environment. When the study team urged the fathers about reducing their outdoor time for their involvement in child's care at home, a mother replied as follows:

If my husband does not work hard to earn money at the time when children in the family are about to grow and develop, how to provide them development inputs such as food, clothes and better education to the child. Reducing time in outdoor activities means reducing income, which means less supply of meat and fish to the child/ren and also from where to provide them with pencils, papers and clothes.

It is, therefore, not only poverty but also time allocation of fathers for ECD that matters in the process of early growth and development of children. Poverty at early life may be especially harmful. Emerging evidence from both human and animal studies highlights the critical importance of early childhood for brain development and for establishing the neural functions and structures that shape future cognitive, social, emotional, and health outcomes⁷. There is also clear evidence emerging from neuroscience that demonstrates strong correlations between socioeconomic status and various aspects of brain function in young children.

Fathers' Involvement in ECD as an Under-prioritized Activity

The claim that poverty kept fathers in poor family apart from their involvement in ECD raised a question about whether the fathers belonging to middle class and rich family backgrounds were better involved in ECD of their children. During the organization of FGDs with the fathers particularly belonging to middle class and rich family, many of them did not declare that they were adequately

"My husband hardly has any interest to involve in ECD of my child. After office, he usually involve in community work. For him, raring and caring of child is a small thing for which mother is sufficient."
-Arati Singh, 32, Housewife

involvement in ECD. They reported that mostly the fathers in such family invest time in the matter of community concern, personal interest and enjoyment. Fathers of some other families

reported being involve in local politics. They spent hours in talking about politics among their companions. They also enjoyed TV programs particularly after and before their office hours and day time business.

"My husband spends his time in talking of politics with his companions, watching TV program, talking with friends on phone about office affairs, but he hardly involves in ECD affairs of the child. He, however, provides me money whenever I ask to buy things for

Some of them spent time in playing cards and talking on phone about their official

"Father's involvement in ECD is redundant because it is an unproductive job."
-Sudan Mahato, 32, Business person

matters. But, they hardly spent any time in child care activities at home.

This information asserts that fathers' involvement in ECD is not

⁷ http://www.stanford.edu/group/scspi/_media/pdf/pathways/winter_2011/PathwaysWinter11_Duncan.pdf

prioritized by father. The data reveals that fathers, mostly in job and business holders' group, often prioritize their job, business transaction, personal entertainment, issue of community concern etc. rather than creating and involving in playful circumstances and sharing their emotions to foster early development of children particularly in home environment. Realizing the underestimated involvement of fathers in ECD the study team focused to explore the reason behind such under-estimation. In reply, one of the fathers told that deliberate involvement of fathers in early development of their children is unproductive and redundant. The attitudes of fathers towards their involvement in ECD show that they intentionally exclude ECD activities from their daily routine. The father, thus, seeks the productivity and return for their involvement in ECD. Since the fathers do not see any visible benefits which can be linked with their current income, social status, entertainment etc. they think this job as unproductive and redundant.

Illiteracy, Unawareness and Involvement of Fathers in ECD

Educating for effective fathering also matters in fathers' involvement in ECD. Some literature gives the evidences that fathers involvement in anti-ECD activities like family violence due to the lack of knowledge and attitude in line of ECD (Gewirtz and Edleson, 2004). The study team generated some similar kind of data which revealed that fathers' ignorance caused their poor understanding towards their involvement in early care and development of their children.

The study found that the father's concern towards the early care and development of their children were superficial. Such attitude of the fathers also led them not to

"There is nothing for fathers to do with the child development. Children are small. They eat, play and sleep. This is the way that every child in the world grows and develops. The child eats what the adult eat in the family. The child plays with the other children in the neighborhood and in the ECD centers. Whole day long they play so they are tired and thus they sleep early at night. These are the usual phenomena in a child life. In this way, the child gradually develops. In this early stage of his life fathers needs not to be so concern and engaged with."

- Ravishankar Chaudhari, 25, Local trader

be involved in ECD of their children in a desired way. A father opined that a child's development means improvement in reading and writing which later helps him earn money. The task of such improvement is duly carried out in the ECD centers. Father's role is just to supply food, clothes, books and pencils.

Early childhood programs have to serve a number of functions; one of them is parental care. Parental care is mutually exclusive in early childhood program. It is, therefore, essential for any program as such to educate parents about the need and importance of their active participation in ECD. Regarding this Cohen and Knitzer (2004) mentioned that ECD program provide young children with nurturing, developmentally appropriate early learning experiences; help parents understand what young children are like. The field data, however, shows that fathers like Ravishankar Chaudhari have hardly possessed sensitivity and understanding about the needs of

children at their early stage. It is very difficult for one to expect active involvement and contribution from fathers if they are deprived of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes towards ECD. On the whole, attitudes of fathers towards ECD centers indicate that they are unaware and unmotivated for their deliberate involvement in the early care and development of their children.

Family Type and the Role of Fathers in ECD

The involvement of fathers in the early care and development of their children were also found to be highly affected by the types of family. In the joint family, the child is often looked after by grandparents. During home visits the study team discussed with the grandparents and the other members of the family. The team found that grandfathers took most concern about the rearing, caring and development of their children. It was reported that the grandfathers carried the children in their laps, helped the children eat and dress up. They also closely watched the children when they were playing and in many cases, as told by grandparents, the children also slept with them at night. It was also reported that the children put their demands to the grandfathers and also complained them about the matter of uninterested things in the family. Thus, particularly in the joint family grandfathers were found to be involved in early care and development of children.

As a result, children in those families were found to be more closures to the grandfathers than the fathers. The

"My child hardly remembers me during the day. He engaged with the other children, grandparents, uncle and aunts in the family. He gets a lot of exposure- outdoor and indoor- with the help of them. I never feel there is wrong with the child in my absence. Family members are doing together more than what I can do for him. For me, there is no need to worry about the child development."

-Horil Singh, 31, business person

father
involvement
in ECD in
such family

"Can his father [indicating his grandson] perform better than what I do for him? I tell him stories before he sleeps at night. He takes bath when I do it. He eats food with me. Whenever I take him in the community or market he often insists to buy something to eat and play and I do it for him. He makes me play with him and I do it for him. He often wants me do things of his interests in the family and I support him in this. When I and his father come home from somewhere, he chooses me (not his father) for getting to my lap."

- Pramod Thakur, 61, Grandfather

type was reported to be less importance in the sense that the child in such family is often supplied with the service of ECD sufficiently by the other members of the family. The role of grandparents, particularly in the Terai community, becomes significant in the sense that fathers often tend to address the economic needs of the family. He, therefore, often engaged with the outdoor activities to generate income. Mothers, on the other hand, are culturally restricted to expose with the outdoor environment. The work such as massaging of the

child is performed by grandmother and exposing of the child with the outside environment is performed by the grandfather. The child mother, however, involves in helping the child take bath and she also washes their sheets. She also dresses up and feeds the child. But the matter of

helping child to the ECD centers, attending parents meeting at the ECD centers and talk about the child related issues are often performed by grandparents.

Perception of Rural and Urban Fathers towards their Involvement in ECD

This study was conducted in both rural and urban parts of Siraha and Udaypur districts. The ECD centers Lahan Municipality (Siraha, Terai) and Triyuga Municipality (Udaypur, Hills) were

taken as the urban sites.

"I have many members in my family. Should I work for the survival of all the family members? Or, should I work only for the development of this child? I work in my little field and I also work for my Mahajan's. Is it possible for me to carry my child to the field where I work during the day? There are child's siblings at home to look after during our absent. During the day child is in the ECD center. My child is ok. I don't think I have to focus the child in special way. The child is reared, cared and nurtured in group, i.e. along with the other family members. That's fine."

- Phekan Saday, 27, rural farmer and wage-worker

Similarly, Fulkahakatti and Bishnupurdktti VDCs (Siraha, Terai) and Jhora VDC (Udaypur, Hill) were taken as the rural sites for this study. In the urban site fathers were mostly job holders and business persons while the fathers in the rural sites were wage-workers and farmers. They reported that due to occupation they hardly could get time to be involved in the

"Town life is very hard. Things of survival are very expensive here. During the day I am engaged in office works. The time after and before office I invest for extra earnings. I understand I need to involve in early development of my child. But I can't do it, at least, at the time of my adulthood. I can't focus only the child at this time of my life particularly when I have opportunity to make money for happy and healthy family life. I supply every need of this child through her mother. But, I can't give her my time, my precious time, for the sake of my family wealth."

- Binod Thakur, 34, Urban father

activities related to early care and development of their children. According to the farmer-fathers male members in the

family were not required to be involved in the child care activities. However, in case of job-holders and business persons the fathers supplied all the goods required to meet the daily needs of children through their mothers. For them, therefore, deliberate attention of father is not necessary in the matter of child rearing practices. Fathers in urban areas mostly remained busy in the activities related to their occupation. Most of the time they spent their leisure time in following news and views, discussing on extra income and on the matter of political concerns. They come home only for food and rest. They contact with the child momentarily. Some fathers told the study team that they earn money which they will spend for child's later education. In this way, they feel that they are involved in child care and development activities. According to the fathers living in the rural areas child development voluntarily takes place in the family. A child eats, plays and sleeps which are common to every child and there is no need for active involvement of the male members of the family in such activities.

The perceptions of the fathers living in both the rural and urban areas reveal no favorable situation in terms of their involvement in ECD. The fathers living in rural areas don't think that it is necessary to be involved in child development activities. Similarly, the fathers living in urban areas recognize the importance of early care and development but they assert that child's mother is solely responsible for child care and development.

Summary

Fathers' involvement in ECD is an overarching issue. According to Carey Casey and National Center for Fathering⁸ children thrive when they have an involved father—someone who loves them, knows them, guides them, and helps them achieve their destiny. The literature mentioned above also holds the views that children are likely to become addicts of drugs and alcohol if they do not have involved father in their early childhood. Premarital pregnancy, poor life in adulthood, lower self-esteem etc. are some fatal consequences that are likely to take place in the later life of children if they are prevented from effective fathering in their early childhood. Effective fathering, thus, has been a sincere agenda to discuss among the academia contributing in building up knowledge in the field of ECD. This study therefore attempted to assess the practices of fathers particularly at early stage of children's life. The study team generated data on fathers' perceptions (as discussed above) towards their own involvement in early care and development of their children. The data revealed that fathers' perceptions on their involvement in the early care and development of their children have largely been controlled by a number of factors. Since a human being can't go beyond culture, fathers' perceptions on their involvement in ECD was found to be culturally bound. Early care of a child in patriarchal family has often been the responsibility of the mother. Active and deliberate involvement of fathers in early child care and development, therefore, has been limited from ancient period.

In the context of this study, fathers perceived that their involvement in ECD is not culturally significant because they considered the mothers as the best persons to take care of young children. A child at his/her early stage of life spends most of the time at home. Culturally, fathers are assigned with outdoor activities and mothers are restricted to the indoor activities. Since mothers are available at home environment where a child's early development takes place, they are supposed to perform the job of early care and development of their children. A child does not need fatherly care as deliberately as they need motherly care at the early stage of their life. They believed that motherly care is full of love, affection, and comfort, tender, delicate and pleasant for which a child is in severe need. They also expressed that the fathers do not possess the skills and patience required for the effective care of children, to the extent, which the mother do. The fathers also considered themselves weaker in comparison to the mothers in terms of establishing deeper level of attachment with children. For these reasons, they supposed that their involvement would not keep any visible meaning at the early care and development of their children.

Poverty has been another contributing factor in making fathers' involvement scanty in the early care and development of their children. Fathers involved in on-wage works and farming often

⁸ <http://www.fathers.com/documents/ebook/5%20Things%20From%20Dad%20Book.pdf>

find themselves so crushed due to hard work for the whole day long that they hardly get any patience and potential time to contribute to the process of early development of their children meaningfully. The influence of poverty in fathers' involvement in ECD, however, was mostly expressed by the fathers of rural part of this study site. The fathers in the urban part of this study were mostly job and business holders. They asked for an excuse for the inability of their involvement in early care and development of their children simply showing the reason that their daily schedule was full of their business and office activities. Due to this, they added that they can't primarily incorporate their active involvement for child care and development. In this way, the agenda of early care and development of children has not been able to make a significant place in the perceptions of both poor, non-poor, rural and urban fathers in the study site.

The data reveals that the fathers in this study site have under-prioritized their involvement in the matters of caring, nurturing and early development of their children. For some fathers, their involvement in early development of their children was redundant and unproductive. For some others, child care was such an unimportant and negligible part of family activity for which mothers at home was sufficient; and that spending fathers' potential time in the same was unreasonable. Moreover, some other fathers considered early development of children as an automatic and casual matter. They viewed that there was no need for fathers to make a deliberate plan and efforts to be involved in this business. Some fathers, thus, at this study site were found spending their time in playing cards, watching TV programs, involving in local political gossips etc. instead of showing their concern in child development activities. Some fathers sought productive return from their involvement in their child development. They linked productivity of their engagement in ECD with economic return or some useful immediate gains. Since they could not see any advantage as such, they termed this job as 'unproductive' and 'redundant' for them. In this way, fathers perceived their participation in ECD as an unimportant effort. They, however, agreed that they communicate their love, affection and warm care with their child for their personal enjoyment; not for the deliberate development of the child.

The perception of fathers in joint family in this study site was governed by the massive involvement of the other family members in the early care and development of child. A child in joint family has an opportunity to interact, play and work with their siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts. In such family, grandfather often was found to play the role of father in early care and development of a child.

Chapter IV

Fathers' Involvement in Early Childhood Development

Fathers' involvement in ECD results a number of benefits in the part of children.

According to Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006) fathers are far more than just 'second adults' in the home. For them, involvement of fathers in child care brings positive benefits to their children that no other person is likely to bring. Fathers have a direct impact on the well-being of their

children⁹. In the context of this research the study generated interesting data and information regarding the role of fathers in child care. The data in this regard have been presented and discussed under four different interventions for child development namely, (a) health and nutrition, (b) play and recreation, (c) interaction and early stimulation, (d) rearing, caring and nurturing of children.

Involvement of Fathers in Child's Health and Nutrition

Fathers' involvement in ECD has essentially reduced health risks of their child. Proportionately more research effort has been aimed at assessing the impacts of father's involvement on child development, functioning and quality of life than on child health (Horn & Sylvester, 2002; Lamb, 2004; as cited in Ball and Moselle, 2007). However, research has shown links between fathers' presence in the home and child and youth mental health, as well as the propensity of children and youth to engage in health risk behaviors and to be injured and hospitalized¹⁰.

I often show my concert for my child's personal hygiene and cleanliness. Though I don't directly involve in family health activities, I often encourage the other family members to keep the family environment fresh and clean. Total efforts that I make for whole of the family health also work for the health of the child.

- Kabir Singh, 32, business person

The current study revealed that the fathers were found being involved in the matters related to their children's health and cleanliness. It was reported that when the child is sick, father takes the child to hospital. A mother mentioned that in the severe sickness condition of a child the father primarily takes initiatives to take the child to the hospital. In such situation the mother also accompanied the child. Mothers are the primary health service providers for children. They provide home-based health services. The fathers show their concern to the children's

"Generally, I take care of my child health. When my child suffers from cold and cough, I massage my child with garlic-oil and let my child wear warm cloths. I also give her hot water to drink and let her have Vicks-steam. But, when my child is caught with fever his father brings medicine from the drug store. In the case of emergency he also carries her to the hospital nearby. In this, I also sometimes go with him carrying the child."

- Renu Thakur, 27, Housewife-

For me, involvement of father should not only take place at the time of sickness; but also to prevent the child from the possible sickness. I, therefore, also take care of the food and drink that the child takes in the family to ensure their good health.

-Rajib Chaudhari, 29, Job holder

I am very much fond of meat and fish. I often buy meat and fish. Along with the adults in the family the child has also frequent opportunities to eat meat and fish.

- Prabhu Chaudhari, 29, a business person

⁹ <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/fatherhood.pdf>.

¹⁰ http://www.fira.ca/cms/documents/123/PH_FI_Report_brief.pdf

health only when they become severely sick.

The data and information collected regarding the involvement of fathers in children's health revealed that the fathers were involved in keeping the cleanliness of the house and surrounding which directly contributed to improve the health conditions of children. It was found that when a child falls sick the father went to dispensaries to buy medicine. He makes sure that the child is supplied with medicine (by the mother) in time. In the FGDs the participants mentioned that the fathers' were mostly involved in child's health issue at the time of sickness.

Fathers during FGD reported that food and drink keeps

I often provide my child with cheeseballs, Kurkure, and sweet. I buy these for my child because he likes them. During summer, papsi, fruity and also ready-made food is common for my child in the family.

-Shekahar Thakur, 25, a barbar

essential space in the health of a child. Food and drink has a visible connection with the money matter or the economic activities of the family.

Since the economic activities in the family in this study site is under the control of male (father), the supply of food and drink to the child in the family often demands fathers' involvement. During FGDs it was reported that fathers who hold jobs in offices or lead business at

Milk and curd is regular food in my family and the child in the family also has the same food which we (parents) have. Rice, dal, saag, roti, beaten rice, etc. are usual food item which the child also shares with us.

- Bikas Thakur, 29, a farmer

local level intend to buy readymade food products for their children. It was found that the practice of giving readymade food to children was prevailed mostly in the families living in urban areas. Some other fathers mentioned that they provided fish and meat for their children. The supply of meat and fish, however, was reported to be more frequent in the families of urban areas than the families in the rural parts of the study site. Food and drink for children in the rural poor family of this study site often remains the same throughout the year. Food in such families often consisted of rice and *dal*, *saag*, *roti*, beaten rice etc. Bread of corn and millet is seasonal food. The informants from the rural families reported that the consumptions of fruits are rare in the poor family. According to the rural informants of this study the children in such families share the same food which the adults usually take. Besides, the study team was also reported that children in the rural parts had opportunity to have fresh and frequent supply of milk and curd than those in the urban areas. The supply of milk and curd to the children of the rural area, however, differ in quantity and frequency depending upon the family backgrounds. In the rural areas some families possessed cows and buffaloes. In such families children had opportunity to consume milk and home-milk products such as rice pudding. But the children in poor and economically deprived families such as Dalit families often were deprived of such opportunities. The fathers were reported to be main responsible persons to supply food for family members. It was reported that fathers also show their concern and take the children to the health centers for having 'Vitamin A' capsules and other immunization facilities for their children. In case of

cleanliness and hygiene of the children the mothers were found taking the responsibilities. It was informed that the children mostly ate stale food (*dal-vat*) in the breakfast particularly in rural areas. Regarding the hygienic environment in some homes the study team found that the surrounding area of the house was properly cleaned.

On the whole, fathers in urban and rural, poor and non-poor families supported in health and nutrition of their children. But their support was not deliberate and specific. The fathers accepted that they generally did not focus on the importance of giving special food to the children while managing and regulating food system in the family. The children generally shared the same food as consumed by the adults in the family. The study team didn't, however, found any routine and fix practices of food for the children. In this regard, the study team was told that the children in the family have food their mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers and other siblings. They also eat whenever they feel that they are hungry. A child, thus, sometimes eats five times and sometimes seven times depending upon the number of members in the family mostly in extended families. However, it was not applicable to the nuclear urban families.

Involvement of Fathers in Play and Recreational Activities of Children

Play is an activity for a child. A child plays because s/he enjoys by playing. I am an adult. I must not spend time by playing with my baby. Playing with a child is ridiculous for a father. I have my own word of works and entertainment. I am not a child; I, therefore, can't play with the child.

- Dev Narayan Chaudhari, 36, a farmer

Play is an essential need for a child's development. It is one of the ways children learn and it also helps children manage their feelings and cope with upsetting things that happen in their lives¹¹. Play helps them build relationships and it is relaxation and fun. Play has a

I don't play with my child. But I manage play things for my child. Mostly, I have brought three-wheelers small wooden cart from carpentry. I have also bought whistle from the market which my child blows and make sound. My child plays with *vadna-kuti* (earthen pots) and also with small rubber ball that I have bought for him. Vehicles made of plastic and dolls of clothes are some play materials for my child at home which she plays with.

- Devan Yadav, 26, farmer

number of positive effects in a child's personal and social life. It helps a child learn some basic life skills. It is one of the ways through which father's can connect himself with his child's social and psychological world¹². This study, therefore, attempted to find out the ways of the fathers involvement in their children's development through games and play activities. Some fathers in the rural part of this study site told that playing with a child is ridiculous. For them, the areas of entertainment for fathers and children are different. They also told that the fathers can't enjoy by playing with toys but children do enjoy by playing with toys.

¹¹ http://www.monavalekindergarten.com.au/uploads/importance_of_play_in_a_childs_development.pdf

¹² <http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT201003HR.pdf>

Many of the fathers both in rural and urban parts of the study sites asserted that due to time constraint they hardly play with their children. They, however, claimed that they managed play things for their children at home. The study team observed that the playthings available for children at home were different between the urban and rural families. The fathers in urban area of this study site basically brought readymade playthings for their children. The fathers in the rural area of this study site, however, reported to manage locally available materials as playthings for their children. Home-made locally available materials mostly were made of earthen pots (*vanda-kuti*), three-wheeler wooden cart, wooden roller etc. Besides these, the study team also observed some plastic-made playthings in the rural families. The fathers in rural families bought whistles, vehicles, aeroplane toys for the children on special occasions like *mela* and festivals like Dashain.

My child plays with soil and sand, pebbles and wooden blocks, dinner plates and bowls, rope and grass. Sometimes she goes on running around the house yard and becomes happy in doing so. For these games, her father does not need to make sincere efforts.

- Ramila Thakur, 27, a rural housewife

One of the mothers reported that her child does not enjoy playing only one game all the time. According to her, the child in the family often wants to play a variety of games. The mother reported that her child plays one game at one occasion and another game at the other occasion. Another mother said that her child plays with soil and sand, pebbles and wooden blocks, rope and grass etc. Another mother that

her child likes to play with goats. The child talks to the goats and gives them grass to eat. The child covers their body with clothes and also she speaks with them as she does with the other members in the family. Such ways of playing were found among the children from the poor rural families. Mothers in the rural parts of the study site reported that the fathers in the family do not have to pay high concentration on accumulating all these play materials for the children and they also don't take children play with great care thinking that it is the age specific activities which take place in early stage of every individual's life.

I like to play with my child but I don't have time. Due to whole day long hard work I am tired working in the field. When I see my child playing, I enjoy; but at the time I don't have enough moods to play with the child. Playing with these nonsense things like sand and rope is child like thing. I can manage playful environment for the child but I can't afford time and energy to play with. Because this is nonsense and also I do not have enough patience for these.

- Sudan Chaudhari, 36, Farmer

The study team enquired why the fathers in this study do not intentionally play with their children. In reply, one of the fathers said that he neither has time and nor interest to play with the child. For the father, playing with child of early age required much patience which he does not possess due to long hours of work in the field. He however asserted that he made efforts for creating playful environment at home in which the child enjoyed playing. He also asserted that playing of children at home gave him pleasure but he, as an adult, does not get inspiration to involve in playing with the child. For him, playing with a child is nonsense and time consuming. But, another father said that he enjoyed playing with the child. He generally plays with the child in the evening after a long day work in the office. For him, working with

complex cases in the office makes him tired and, in the evening at home, he wants to play and laugh with children which makes him feel relief. He generally plays a horse riding game with the child in which he (father) comes in the pose of a horse and the child rides on his back. Taking the child on the back the father walks like a horse. This game makes the child happy.

It was also found that the fathers in most of the families in rural areas had managed swings for their children. They managed it by tying two sides of a long wide garment with the *dalin* and in the middle the child is asked to sit. Any family member, thus, pushes the child forward and backward and the child feels pleasure in doing this.

The fathers from rural areas reported that their children mostly play with these play materials with their siblings at home. According to them, children sometimes play alone with these playthings and they sometimes force their mothers to play with them. They also demand to take them to the neighborhood with these playthings where they can play with their peers. The child in the joint family had ample opportunities to play with their siblings and also with their grandparents. The child in such family gets accompanied by many family members in games and play, while the child in nuclear family was found to be deprived of such opportunity.

It was found that the play materials like rubber balls, plastic bus/ plane/car, whistle, balloon were bought for the children by their fathers. It was reported that sometimes fathers carry the children to Mela and market where they bought such play materials for children. In many households children's play materials such as there-wheelers wooden carts were found available. The children

I often feel tired of working in the office during day time. In the evening I come back home. To get rid of the feelings created due to the complex circumstances of my office I often play with my child. My child likes to play horse-riding game with me in which he makes me like a horse and he rides on my back. Then he asks me to move. When I move ahead, he laughs, makes noise and, thus, enjoys.

-Mahendra Chaudhari, 37, job holder

were found playing with the carts and they were enjoying. In some households fathers managed swing for their child to swing. The study team also observed "*vanda kuti*" (kitchen pots made of earth/soil) in some families. Mostly, the parents especially fathers in the poor families let their children play with the other children in the community. But the same is not the case in the families where fathers were involved in some sort of official jobs, business etc. Generally, in middle class families the fathers restricted the children in the matter of playing with his/her peers in the community. In such family, the child is kept strictly within the periphery of the house thinking that the child may learn some unnecessary culture/habits/practices if s/he is freed to mix and play with the other children in the neighborhood/community.

Fathers' Involvement in Interaction and Early Stimulation

The role of fathers as provider, protector and teacher has got essential space in the early development of children. The fathers also demonstrated empathy, respect and genuineness in interactions with the children. Interaction with the father at early age of the child also contributes to child's support and discipline. Interaction with the father provides the child an opportunity to regulate his/her emotions in positive way. The frequency of contact with the father in course of interaction with him makes the child feel that he/she is safe and that he/she is likely to meet his/her demands. Having positive interactions and enjoying time together is as important as the amount of time spent together. Fathers also tend to promote independence and an orientation of the child to the outside world. Fathers often push achievement while mothers stress nurturing, both of which are important to healthy development. As a result, children who grow up with

I talk with my child while I play with him. I encouraged him to throw a rubber ball with as much effort as he can. Sometimes I also throw the ball slowly showing the child that I can't throw it with more forcefully as he does. This makes him happy. I give him a bold sound, "come on, and make one more effort". He then interestingly attempts to do the things.

- Ravi Singh, 27,

fathers appropriate involvement are more comfortable exploring the world around them and more likely to exhibit self-control and pro-social behaviors. A meaningful interaction at the early age of a child helps him/her develop his/her linguistic competence, which further contributes to cope with the psychosocial complexities that appears while facing the outside world.

The study team, therefore, enquired about the ways that the fathers spent their time with their children at early age. One of the fathers told that he interacts with his child more closely when he gets an opportunity to play with him. During play he encourages his child boldly to make more attempts. As a result, his child interestingly performs the things. The other opportunity for a child to

interact with his/her father was reported to be the time when the father took the child to the neighborhood or to the market nearby. According to a father the child puts forth a number of queries during the visit to the neighborhood. The child's queries mostly focused to explore the relationship and also about the works that the people in the neighborhood do.

Another father claimed to interact with his/her child focusing to shape their behaviors in desirable way. According to him, a child needs to be good right from his early age. For the father, the quality of goodness in the part of child can be ensured when the father instructs the child right from the very beginning. The father told the study team that such interaction between child and father often becomes fruitful in helping the child to be obedient. During FGDs the participating fathers asserted that such type of interaction helps the child to understand why a particular behavior is good or bad. The fathers also held the view that the children from such interactions can learn the quality of making choices in life. Regarding early interaction and stimulation literature¹³ says that both mothers and fathers encourage their babies to investigate the world, manipulate objects, and explore physical relationships. However, mothers tend to speak soothingly and softly in repetitive rhythms to their infants and snugly hold them. Fathers tend to provide more verbal and physical stimulation, by patting their babies gently and communicating to them with sharp bursts of sound. As babies grow older, many come to prefer playing with their fathers who provide unpredictable, stimulating, and exciting interaction. This stimulation is important because it fosters healthy development of the baby's brain and can have lasting effects on children's social, emotional, and intellectual development. Infants with involved fathers tend to score higher on tests of thinking skills and brain development (<http://www.civitas.org.uk/hwu/FatherFactsheet.pdf>).

I invest my time with my child. I want my child to grow with good behaviors. I, therefore, often instruct my child about the things to do. I teach him to hate the bad things and behaviors so that he can grow as a good being from early years of his life.

- Bibek Chaudhari, 25,

When I come home from work my child comes to talk to me. He touches my body, holds my wears and move around asking me, "What you have brought for me?" I ask him, first, to tell me what you did with your teacher at ECD center. He then starts to sing song, dance and also say the names of games that he plays at ECD center. He also makes me sing by following him. He reports me about the thing that goes wrong, if any, in the family. I often talk about his likes and dislikes in the family and also in the ECD center.

- Abhisek Thakur, 33,

¹³ <http://www.civitas.org.uk/hwu/FatherFactsheet.pdf>

The study team found different scope of interaction. In some family, the father makes child's works and performance a subject/content of interaction. A father like Abhisek focuses to talk about how his child participated in the activities at ECD center and what his teacher did during the day for him. In course of interaction with the father, the child explains the things he performs at ECD center. A father also reported that his child informs him about the things that happen at home and also he expresses his acceptance and denial in relation to family matters. The study team found quite a few numbers of fathers who could make lively relationship through interaction with their children as discussed above. It was also found that the fathers from rural and poor family backgrounds more frequently involved in interaction with their children compared to the fathers from urban areas.

I leave home early in the morning and come back at late night. My mind is occupied with a lot of business activities like public relation, sending products to market, dealing with the clients.... Interacting with child is a small thing which is performed by mother. I send the child to ECD centre where my child gets a lot of friends to talk with. There is nothing for me to talk with my child.

-Rabindra Thakur, 37, business person,

During FGD it was discussed that farmers were often engaged in manual work in the field and when they come home they intend to talk with their children for their entertainment. But the same was not reported to be true in the case of those who reside in urban areas and also hold business or office as their professional backgrounds. Generally, activities in the office or business for fathers often demand a thorough brainstorming. As discussed in the FGD they told that fathers in business or office holders needed to settle a lot of issues during the day. They also have to deal with many clients and build up rapport with many people related to their job. These activities demand a lot of mental exercise not only in office hours but also at the time when fathers remain at home. The fathers, thus, often prefer to avoid family issues particularly their involvement with children and interact with them in relation to children's work and interest. They avoid them simply saying that they do not have time to entangle in these trifle matters. Most of the mothers in the urban study site informed that fathers often leave home early in the morning and come back at late night. According to them, those who hold office job leave home after morning meal but they remain busy either on phone gossiping with friends or some sorts of paper works related to their office even at home.

He (indicating a boy of about 19) does not carry his son in front of us because he feels shy of doing this. How can he talk with his son? What can he talk with him about?

- a community member

Physical contact with the child by carrying him/her to neighborhood and interacting with the child among the many family members is often avoided by those who newly become fathers particularly in their young age. In an FGD, it was reported that newly married couple when becomes parents often feel shy of marriage matters, bearing child and exposing oneself with the neighbors as a father. Involvement of fathers in interaction with children particularly in joint family is very scarce. Since there are many members in such family to talk

with the child, the fathers' interactions with child is supposed to be less important. Also, fatherly care and interaction in such family is supposed to be performed by uncles or grandfather in the family. The father in such family, thus, does not realize the need of his involvement for interaction with the child.

Assessment of Children's Development

The study team observed physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children under this study to examine the roles of fathers in holistic development of the children. There were six indicators to examine each aspect (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive) of development. Each indicator was assessed in five points Likert scale namely poor, fair, good, very good and excellent. Each aspect of development of children assessed under this study is presented and discussed below:

Assessment of the Physical Development of the Children

The assessment of physical development of the children was performed by observing their health and physical performance. The indicators to assess physical development and the rating scales along with their values (in number and percentage) are presented in the table below:

Table1: Physical Development (N= 62)

Indicators	Poor		Fair		Good		very good		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Wash hands before eating, after using toilet	9	14.5	16	25.8	28	45.2	9	14.5	0	0
Looks well nourished (skin glow, hair color, bright eyes)	11	17.7	13	21.0	24	38.7	14	22.6	0	0
Differentiate sweet, sour and salty taste	2	3.2	14	22.6	32	51.6	13	21.0	1	1.6
Threads beads/cub corns	12	19.4	16	25.8	30	48.4	3	4.8	1	1.6
Catches/throw balls in one meter distance	3	4.8	21	33.9	31	50.0	7	11.3	0	0
Child uses crayon .pencil to draw line, circle, triangle, etc.	23	37.1	7	11.3	25	40.3	1	1.6	6	9.6

According to the above table the majority of the students were placed in 'good' position in performing activities (indicators mentioned above). The table shows that most of the children were able to differentiate sweet, sour and salty taste (51.6%) and many of them (50%) were able to catch and throw balls at one meter distance. Very few children were categorized as 'very good' in terms of the given activities indicating their physical development. The number of children in the category of 'poor' and 'fair' was more than the ones in 'very good' and 'excellent'. This means that more than 50% of the children need care for their physical development.

Assessment of the Physical Development of the Children

For the assessment of social development of the children the researcher observed their social behaviors. The indicators of social development consisted of six social performance of children as mentioned in the table below:

Table 2: Social Development (N= 62)

Indicators	poor		Fair		Good		very good		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Able to Introduce oneself	3	4.8	6	9.7	30	48.4	20	32.3	3	4.8
Mix up with group in activity	4	6.5	17	27.4	30	48.4	11	17.7	0	0
Helps to friends/teacher	4	6.5	21	33.9	24	38.7	13	21.0	0	0
Respect all without any discrimination	6	9.7	30	48.4	19	30.6	7	11.3	0	0
Shares play materials/things	7	11.3	29	46.8	16	25.8	10	16.1	0	0
Acknowledge on any mistake	10	16.1	28	45.2	20	32.3	3	4.8	1	1.6

Table 2 consists of the six indicators to measure social development of the children under this study. Basically, in the first three indicators of social development almost half number of the students (N=62) performed in the way that they were placed in 'good' category. However, the majority of students fell upon 'fair' category in terms of their performance for the last three indicators of social development. This means that majority of the students under this study are fair and good in terms of their social development.

Assessment of Emotional Development of the Children

The status of emotional development was assessed in terms of the confidence, happiness, and feelings of children and their capacity of adjustment in new situation. The following table consists of the status of emotional development of children under this study.

Table 3: Emotional Development (N=62)

Indicators	Poor		Fair		Good		very good		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Interact with Confident	4	6.5	30	48.4	24	38.7	4	6.5	0	0
Express happiness	2	3.2	13	21.0	39	62.9	8	12.9	0	0
Feels safe	3	4.8	30	48.4	27	43.5	2	3.2	0	0
Shares own need/ others need	5	8.1	16	25.8	30	48.4	9	14.5	2	3.2
Demonstrate empathy(same	6	9.7	36	58.1	15	24.2	5	8.1	0	0

feeling)										
Adjust well in new situation place	10	16.1	28	45.2	20	32.3	4	6.5	0	0

According to the above table almost half number of the children fell upon 'fair' category in terms of their emotional development. However, in expressing happiness and in sharing personal needs 63% and 48% (respectively) of the children under this study were placed in 'good' category. This means that the emotional development of the children appeared to be mostly fair and good.

Status of Cognitive Development of the Children

Cognitive development of the children was examined to see the knowledge-level performance of the children. The cognitive development was assessed in terms of the competence for naming and differentiating things, solving problems and constructing meaning out the context. The performances of cognitive development have been presented in the table below:

Table 4: Cognitive Development (N=62)

Indicators			Fair		Good		very good		Excellent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Name objectives, people	3	4.8	13	21.0	31	50.0	13	21.0	2	3.2
Differentiate size, shape, weight, texture	12	19.4	32	51.6	15	24.2	3	4.8	0	0
Solves problem –fixes the puzzle appropriately	19	30.6	23	37.1	12	19.4	8	12.9	0	0
Construct meaning from observation of object, picture and events	18	29.0	19	30.6	21	33.9	4	6.5	0	0
Listens with patience for 5 minutes	14	22.6	13	21.0	25	40.3	9	14.5	1	1.6
Recalls songs, story, events	15	24.2	21	33.9	17	27.4	9	14.5	0	0

The table 4 consists of the six indicators for measuring cognitive development of the children under this study. In naming people and things, in constructing meaning out of the context and also in patience listening 50%, 33.9% and 40.3% children came in 'good' category. In solving problems and differentiating shape, size and weight, 37% and 51.6% of the children fell into the category "Fair". According to the table most of the children fall into 'good' and 'fair' categories and very few or no children fall into 'very good' and 'excellent' categories. This shows that the majority of the children under this study are in 'fair' and 'good' category in terms of their cognitive development.

To sum up, the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children as discussed above appeared to be in 'good' category. The qualitative information, however, shows that fathers under this study contributed very little time and energy for early care and development of their

children. It is, therefore, apparently seemed that the quantitative result of this study in relation to children's (physical, social, emotional and cognitive) development is the product of the contribution of family members (other than fathers) in rearing, caring and nurturing process of children.

Summary

The study focused to assess the involvement of fathers in the ECD activities for their children. It focused to explore the way of communicating household skills and learning to the children and also promoting early stimulation of children. It was reported that the child often intends to broom floor, clean clothes, cook and serve food as their mother does in the kitchen. It was also reported that the child performed activity when asked by family members such as "bring glass". These activities in the part of the child were reported to be the result of imitation of their mothers' activity in the family environment. The family members also said that the children sing songs and tell stories what they learned in the ECD centers. Fathers listened to the children's songs and stories. Fathers also deliberately asked the children to say the things they did in the ECD centers. ECD centers in the study site minimized the role of father in the matter of learning and early stimulation. According to them, the child remains in ECD centers whole day long. S/he thus learns things from facilitator and by interacting with his/her peers. The child acts, participates and performs the things by observing his/her peers in the ECD center. When the child comes home from ECD center his/her father (if available) at home encourages him/her to tell what s/he has learned at the centers. In some families, child stimulation is conditional. If a child cries: father says, "If you keep quiet, I will give you new toys." In some families, child's cry is suppressed with the fear of beating by the father. During FGD, interview, interaction and home survey the study team developed an impression that fathers do contact their children but such contact often remain momentary. While contacting the children fathers' role remained prescriptive. They often instruct the children not/to do particular things. The role and involvement of father in disciplining the child was reported to be appreciative. In terms of disciplining the child the father first approaches the child politely and smoothly but he also becomes strict and tyrant when the child sticks to his/her demands. Father often contacts the child momentarily when he/she returns home after a whole day-long work. Generally, in the nuclear family father carry the child and play with him/her to replace mother and let her work in the kitchen or perform other household works.

Chapter V

Major Findings and Recommendations

Findings

The findings of the study have been presented as per the research questions under the three different headings below:

Fathers' Understanding of ECD

The fathers under this study understood ECD in terms of physical (lifting head, crawling, catching things and playing with children), cognitive (matching the time and activities like eating, sleeping, going to ECD centers), early literacy (reading and writing), formation of habits (*sanskar*).

Many of the father informants explained that facilitators at ECD centers are essentially responsible to contribute to meet physical, social, cognitive and emotional development in the part of the children. Some other father informants asserted that family, friends and community of the children also play a vital role in early development of a child. The fathers under this study understood that ECD is the product of rigorous teaching at ECD centers and, also, it is the outcome of the child's interaction with their peers and family members.

Fathers' Perceptions towards their Involvement in ECD

- The perceptions of fathers for their involvement in the early care and development of their child has largely been controlled by a number of factors like socio-cultural tradition, family economy, fathers' occupation, parents role performance in the family, type of the family etc.
- Fathers' perception on their involvement in ECD was found to be culturally bound. Child at their early stage of life often remains at home environment. Culturally, fathers are assigned with outdoor activities which mothers are restricted for the same. Since mothers are available at home environment where children's early development takes place, they (mothers) are supposed to take the responsibility of early care and development of their children. Fathers, therefore, perceived that their involvement in ECD is culturally insignificant.
- For fathers of this study site, a child does not need fatherly care as deliberately as they need motherly care at the early stage of their life. They believed that motherly care (not fatherly care) is full of love, affection, comfort, tender, delicate and pleasant for which a child is in severe need. They also expressed that they do not possess the skills and patience required for the effective care of their children, to the extent, which the children's mothers do. They also expressed themselves weaker compared to the children's mothers in terms of establishing deeper level of attachment with children. For these reasons, they supposed that their involvement would not keep any visible meaning at the early care and development of their children.
- Poverty was another factor to make fathers' involvement scanty in the early care and development of their children. Fathers involved in on-wage works and farming often find themselves so crushed due to hard work for the whole day long that they hardly get any

patience and potential time to contribute to the process of early development of their children meaningfully. The influence of poverty in fathers' involvement in ECD, however, was mostly expressed by the fathers from the rural part of sample sites. The fathers in the urban part of this study mostly held job in some private or government offices or they had some kind of business to run. They asked for an excuse for the inability of their involvement in early care and development of their children. They expressed that their daily schedule is full of their business and office activities in which they can't primarily incorporate their active involvement for child care and development. In this way, the agenda of early care and development of child has not been able to make a significant room in the perceptions of poor, non-poor, rural and urban fathers in the study site.

- The fathers in this study site have under-prioritized their involvement in the matter of caring, nurturing and early development of their children. For some fathers, their involvement in early development of their children is redundant and unproductive. For some others, child care is such an unimportant and negligible part of family activity for which mother at home is sufficient; and that spending fathers' potential time in the same is ridiculous. For some others, early development of children is so automatic and casual that there is no need for fathers to make a deliberate plan and efforts to pay for. Some fathers, thus, at this study site spend their time in playing cards, enjoying TV programs, involving in local political gossip etc. instead of showing their concern in child development activities. Some fathers sought productive return from their involvement in ECD. They linked productivity of their engagement in ECD with economic return or some useful immediate gain. Since they could not see any advantage as such, they termed this job as 'unproductive' and 'redundant' for them. Despite such negligible perception they agreed that they communicate their love, affection and warm care with their children, which most often focused for their personal enjoyment; not for the deliberate development of children.
- Illiteracy and unawareness among fathers about ECD was also found to be the responsible factor that hampered their active participation in the child development. Some fathers claimed that there is nothing to do for them in caring their children except managing food and clothes. For them, growth and development of a child is a natural process which automatically takes place in the family environment after birth.
- The perception of fathers in joint family in this study site was governed by the massive involvement of the other family members in the early care and development of children. A child in joint family has an opportunity to interact, play and work with his/her siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts. In such family, grandfather often was found to play the role of the father. Hence, fathers' involvement ECD was not reported to be essential.

Fathers' Involvement in ECD

Despite the above meager understanding and perception of the fathers in the study site they were found to be involved in care and development of their children. Their involvement in ECD has been presented under the following headings.

- **Involvement of Fathers in Child's Health.** Fathers in the study site were also found to be involved in the health matters and cleanliness of their children. When the child is sick, father takes the child to the hospital. Father involves in keeping the cleanliness of the house and surrounding which also contributes to the child health. When the child is sick father goes to dispensaries to buy medicine. He enquires whether the child is supplied with medicine (by the mother) in time. It was found that fathers' involved in children's health issue take place mostly at the time when their children become sick. Fathers also showed their concern and took the children to the health centers for giving 'Vitamin A' capsules and other immunizations services for their children. For cleanliness and hygiene mostly mothers performed the task; not father.
- **Involvement of Fathers in Child's Nutrition.** Generally children in both urban and rural study were provided with rice, curry, bread etc. as a main food in the morning and in the evening. The urban fathers, however, provided their children with readymade food such as chow-chow, biscuit etc. They also supplied their children with meat and fish. Fathers in urban area also supply their children with fruits sometimes. Food and drink in the rural poor family often remained the same throughout the year. Food in such family often consists of rice and *dal*, *saag*, *roti*, beaten rice etc. Bread of corn and millet is seasonal food for children in such family. Fruits for children in rural poor family were found to be rare. The child in such family shares the same food which the adults usually have. Children in the rural areas of this study site had fresh and frequent supply of milk and curd than those in the urban areas of the study site. In the rural study site some families possessed cows and buffalos to have regular milk from them. The children in such families often had opportunities to have milk and home-made milk products such as rice pudding. But the children in poor and economically deprived families like Dalits are often deprived of such opportunities. Some children in rural poor families were mostly found to eat stale food (*dal-vat*) in the breakfast. The fathers accepted that they generally do not prioritize food for the child separately from the food system in the family as a whole. The child generally eats food from the share of adults' food in the family. This means that there is no practice of cooking food only focusing the children of early age in the family. The study team didn't, however, found any routine and fix practices of food for the children. The children in the family have food every time when the adults in the family eat. They eat with their mothers, grandfather, grandmother, siblings and fathers. They also eat when they are hungry. The child, thus, sometimes eats five times and sometimes seven depending upon the number of members in the family (joint family); but the same was not case in the nuclear urban family.

- **Involvement of Fathers in Play and Recreational Activities of the Child.**

For some fathers, playing with a child is ridiculous. For him, playing with a child is nonsense and time consuming. Fathers were hardly found to play with their child. Their time constraint was found to be the major factor which barred fathers from playing with their child. They however made efforts for creating playful environment at home in which the child enjoys playing. They managed play materials for their children. The fathers in urban area brought readymade playthings for their child. The fathers in the rural area of this study site, however, reported to manage locally available materials as playthings for their children. Home-made locally available materials mostly were made of earthen pots (*vanda-kutti*), three-wheeler wooden cart, wooden roller etc. The children in rural family were also found to play with plastic-made playthings. The fathers in rural family managed whistles, vehicles, aeroplane toys for the children on special occasion of *mela* and festivals like Dashain. Children were found to play one game at one occasion and another game at the other occasion. They were also found to play with soil and sand, pebbles and wooden blocks, rope and grass etc. The parents especially fathers in the poor family let their children play with the other children in the community. But the same is not the case in the family where fathers involve in some sort of office job, business etc. Generally, in non-poor family the fathers tyrannically control the child in the matter of playing with his/her peers in the community. In such family, the child is kept strictly within the periphery of the house thinking that the child may learn some unnecessary culture/habits/practices if s/he is freed to mix and play with the other children in the neighborhood/community.

- **Fathers' Involvement in Interaction and Early Stimulation.** The study team also observed the practices of communicating household skills to the children in question and approaching for early stimulation. The study team focused to assess the involvement of fathers in these activities. It was reported that the child often intends to broom floor, clean clothes, cook and serve food as their mother does in the kitchen. It was also reported that the child performed activity when asked by family members such as "bring glass". These activities in the part of the child were reported to be the result of imitation of their mothers' activity in the family environment. The family members also informed the study team that the child sing songs and tell stories what they learned in the ECD centers. Father listen to the child what they sing and tell. Father also deliberately asks the child to say the things they did in the ECD centers.

ECD centers in the study site were found to minimize the role of father in the matter of learning and early stimulation. According to the informants, the child remains in ECD centers whole day long. S/he thus learns things from facilitator and among their peers. The child acts, participate and perform the things by observing their peers in the ECD centers. When the child comes home from ECD center their father (if available) at home encourages him/ her to say what s/he learns at the centers. In some family, child stimulation is conditional. Children cries: father says, "If you keep quiet, I will give you new toys." In some family, child's cry is suppressed with the fear of beating by the father. During FGD, interview, interaction and home survey the study team developed an impression that fathers do contact their child but such contact often remain momentary. While contacting the child fathers' role remain prescriptive. They often instruct the child not/to do particular things. The role and involvement of father in disciplining the child was reported to be appreciative. In terms of disciplining the child the father first approach the child politely and smoothly but he also becomes strict and tyrant when the child stick to their demand. Father often contact the child momentarily when they come back home after whole day long work. Generally, in the nuclear family father carry the child and play with them to replace mother to let her work in the kitchen or perform the other household works. In most family, fathers approach the child to play and interact with him/her for personal enjoyment.

Father perceived their involvement in ECD as a secondary aspect of family responsibility and could not get any significant changes leading to give less important role in the child development. Such perception of father was traditionally defined and culturally bound. More specifically, time provided by father could not give significant improvement in the child's early child development (ECD).

Quantitative results give an important learning in relation to fathers' involvement and child development. The fathers generally in this study site were not reported to involve in ECD interaction, meetings organized by the ECD centers. As a result, they were remained uninformed about their role performance in their child development. Second, due to severe engagement in economic activities the fathers could not provide quality time for the development of their child. Since socio-cultural tradition prioritizes mothers, not fathers, for the early care and development of a child, fathers were mostly found to ignore their involvement in child development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion the study team has presented some recommendations to address the constraints in fathers' involvement in ECD. Some strategies identified to promote participation by fathers in childcare settings include:

1. Since the fathers' understanding towards ECD do not cover the holistic development of their children, it is essential to run parenting education program on a regular basis so that fathers' active participation could be ensured.
2. It is therefore advisable to offer activities for both father and mother in relation to early care and development of their children.
3. Father sensitizing program needs to be organized focusing to bring awareness among fathers about their active participation in early care and development of their children.

4. It is very essential to train fathers to develop skills on scheduling their daily activities so that they can adjust child care activities imperatively in their daily schedule.
5. The age old tradition of rearing, caring and nurturing of children by mothers need to be intervened with the new knowledge system of ECD in which fathers as key persons to lead economic activities in the family must also be key persons to decide for the early care and development of their children.
6. One remarkable cause for insignificant involvement of father was female facilitator in ECD centers. Father of a particular child at ECD center often feel hesitant to interact with the female facilitator particularly in rural areas. It is advisable to recruit male facilitator also in the ECD center who can approach children's fathers without any hesitation.

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