



Early Journey of Life Project

INNOVATION INTRODUCTION

The Early Journey of Life (EJOL) is a parenting education program which focuses on the first 1000 days of the child's life. It was formerly called Learning Clubs for Women's Health and Infant Health and Development, and is an intervention developed in a collaboration between the Research and Training Centre for Community Development (RTCCD) in Hanoi, Vietnam and Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. The innovation addresses maternal physical and mental health and child health and development from pregnancy until two years after birth.

RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

EJOL identifies and recognizes the lack of caregiver and early childhood learning opportunities that are prevalent in areas with low socioeconomic status (1-4). Prior research from RTCCD and Monash University has found that "in rural Vietnam during pregnancy, 32% of women report food insecurity, 20% have a BMI < 18.5, 80% are iodine deficient, 17% have iron deficiency anaemia, 19% have experienced intimate partner violence and a third meet criteria for a common mental disorder." (1-2) Other risks include unresponsive caregiving and stunting (2-4). Interventions in early childhood development will help to reduce risks of health and development for both women and children.



Innovation Design



Field Implementation

Department of Health



Department of Education and Training



Women's Union
Ha Nam province

Sponsor



Grand Challenges Canada
Grands Défis Canada



Policy and Technical Advisory



Project Term

2018 – 2020

PROGRAM DESIGN

The EJOL intervention is a structured program combining perinatal stage-specific information, learning activities and social support. It comprises 20 sessions, in 19 accessible, facilitated groups for women at a community centre every two weeks from mid-pregnancy and every four weeks after childbirth until the end of the first postpartum year, and one home visit during the first postpartum week [5].

These twenty sessions, covering nine topics, are organised into five modules targeting perinatal essential knowledge and skills. In the first two modules, the program targets pregnant women and their husbands/partners. From modules 3 to 5, the program targets the family unit as a whole including mothers, fathers and grandparents.

The program contributes to Vietnam's goals as a signatory to the Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development Framework and Care for Child Development are the two frameworks that are provided by both the WHO and UNICEF.

9 MAIN TOPICS

- Pregnancy care
- Childbirth preparation
- New-born care
- Management of common childhood illnesses
- Child-caregiver interaction and stimulation
- Child injury prevention

Cross-cutting themes

- Breastfeeding and supplementary feeding
- Perinatal mental health
- Gender empowerment



5 MODULES

- Module 1 – Early and mid - pregnancy
- Module 2 – Late pregnancy and New-born care
- Module 3 – Promoting Child Development 2 – 6 months
- Module 4 – Promoting Child Development 7 – 12 months
- Module 5 – Promoting Child Development 13 – 24 months



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

The EJOL educational package includes 3 family books and 5 facilitator booklets, along with 45 video clips and 30 posters which were developed on the basis of existing evidence that were all tested in trials in low and middle income countries for effectiveness in addressing at least one risk to early childhood development, and reviewed and approved by an expert team from the Vietnam Ministry of Health and RTCCD. Evidence-informed content is from interventions to address each risk tested in randomised controlled trials in other resource-constrained settings. Content has been translated and culturally adapted for Vietnam. Acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of the package as a whole has been established in a randomised control trial in Vietnam.



INNOVATION DELIVERY

At the community level, each commune operates one EJOL club. Club facilitators are three trained community-based personnel, which include Commune Health Clinic staff, kindergarten teacher and Women's Union staff. Each of the sessions lasted 60-90 minutes. In each session families will be invited to watch step-based instructional video clips. Then, they practice their skills using a baby-doll or role play or directly with their baby. After that, families will engage in discussion of previous practice and how they would change after watching the videos. The take home messages are delivered in posters and shown on the screen for family to remember. So, when each session is over, the posters are shared to families in the Zalo group (similar to WhatsApp) to promote behaviour changes and interaction between families.

POLICY ADVISOR AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT



The Ministry of Health Vietnam's General Department of Maternal and Child Health has strong engagement with the project from the beginning. The program design and its activities were all aligned with the national policies. The Department also provided experts for the design team to ensure that the intervention was evidence-based and well designed.

The WHO and UNICEF country offices are also the key stakeholders for the EJOL program..



For future collaboration and scale-up, please contact

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