

## SPRING-ELS: Phase 1

### Explanatory model of impact of childhood adversity and early life stress in Rewari, Haryana

**Participants:** 4-6 mothers of one year old children (not enrolled in trial) in Rewari, Haryana

**Location:** throughout SPRING site.

**Moderator:** Deepali Verma, Research Associate, SPRING-ELS

**Language:** Hindi

#### Objective:

To develop an explanatory model illustrating mothers' understanding of and explanations for the impact of childhood adversity and early life stress on their infants in rural Haryana, India

#### Some risk factors for childhood adversity and early life stress in this setting:

1. maternal depression
2. low socio-economic status
3. abuse and neglect
4. poor parental-child interaction
5. domestic and community violence

#### Five dimensions to be considered in this explanatory model (*adapted from Kleinman*):

1. Aetiology – *what is the cause?*
2. Onset – *when does it start?*
3. Consequences – *what happens to a child because of it?*
4. Prognosis – *how will this affect the child in future?*
5. Management – *how can you treat or prevent it?*

#### Instructions to facilitator:

The following is a guide. Try to ask all the questions below in the order given, but it is more important to maintain the flow of discussion. Suggested probes have been included.

#### A note on probing:

In-depth probing will allow you to clarify and illuminate responses given by a participant. Some examples include:

- Silence – allowing a participant to amplify what they have said
- Mirroring – repeating back what the participant has just said  
Repeating the respondent's words as a question ie "milk is good for children?"
- Confronting the participant to clarify an earlier response "I'm a little confused, earlier you said that XYZ"
- Using keyword probes – such as:

| Participant statement | Moderator probe               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| It's good             | What about it is good?        |
| I like the size       | What is it about the size?    |
| It is convenient      | In what way is it convenient? |
| It works              | Can you tell me how it works? |

- Using the third-person approach ie "you seem to have strong views on this. What do you think others might feel?"
- Other probes include:
  - o Can you tell me more about that?

- What about that?
- What do you mean by that?
- What makes you feel that way?
- Can you think of an example of that?
- I'd like to know more about your thinking on that issue?
- I'm not sure I understand how you are using the word \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are some of the reasons for feeling as you do?
- You started to say something about...?
- You mentioned something about...?

Other tools for running an excellent FGD have been outlined in training and include: Sensitivity to participant disclosure, Reweaving of previous discussions, Continuous linking together of comments, Flexibility around the topic guide, Handling conflict and other problems in the group, encouraging the group to talk to each other rather than to you, being able to convey your lack of understanding appropriately, encourage less vocal participants to speak amongst others.

Remember – your job is not to teach, nor to judge. It is important that you do not look down on participants – you are trying to learn from them, not to inform or persuade them. We are looking for participants to take part and tell us what they know.

## Guide

### Introduction

*Remember that participants will start to relax as they see that you are relaxed and when you speak in a casual and friendly manner. Start talking about normal day-to-day things as the participants are getting themselves seated.*

First introduce yourself. This should be something like:

- “Hello, I am Deepali Verma, I moved to Rewari two months ago and am working with Sangath who are the organisation running the SPRING project which you have been involved in.

Then explain what we hope to get out of today’s session. Something like:

- “We’ve brought you all here today so that we can learn from you. We really hope that you’ll be able to help us understand more about you, your children and your community. We are thinking particularly about children who are growing up in different types of households, and trying to understand what helps and hinders children as they develop. We are not going to be teaching you today, or asking for any information about your families except any stories you decide you want to share.”

Try to make participants feel at ease, and explain that whatever they think is fine with you and there are no right or wrong answers. Something like:

- “Please feel at ease. There are no right or wrong answers – it is okay if you disagree with others in the group. Please tell us what you think.”
- “I am not connected to this subject and don’t mind what you say. Nothing you say will shock me, surprise me or make me think you are a good or a bad person. So don’t worry about what I might think.”
- Please speak one at a time so that everyone has a chance to talk.

**Note to Facilitator:** Please fill in the participant grid at the start of the session so that we can understand a little about each participant’s background.

| Name | Village | Age | Number of children | Children age | Does any work outside the home? | Getting Kilkaari visits? |
|------|---------|-----|--------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
|      |         |     |                    |              |                                 |                          |
|      |         |     |                    |              |                                 |                          |
|      |         |     |                    |              |                                 |                          |

## Stage 1: Warm-up

**Note to facilitator:** ask some non-threatening questions here and make sure not to establish a hierarchy between participants – ie we shouldn't ask how many children each woman in order to avoid making some women appear 'more expert' than others. Good questions would be: first name and other non-threatening non-hierarchical questions.

Then start with something like:

- Thank you for coming today. I hope my introduction helps you understand what we are going to do today. If you have any questions, please ask now or anytime.
- Lets begin with a small exercise. I'm going to put out a pile of pictures. Do you think you can sort these into piles? We'll make three piles. What makes your child 1) Happy 2) Sad 3) Has no effect. See if you all agree or whether you disagree on some of them – try to decide the final piles together.

### Pile sorting exercise – 1st

Pictures of children with a variety of facial expressions. Around 20 pictures.

Sort into piles of which child is: 1) Happy 2) Sad 3) Neutral 4) Cannot tell

### Pile sorting exercise–2nd

Pictures of items and people and some objects – around 25-30 items, for example: Mother, Father, Grandmother, Ball, Food, Sari, Chunni, Rain, Sun, Cow, Goat, Chicken, Car, Sweets, Paper, Pencil, Hat, Book, Bottle, Toy, Shiny object, building, tree, separation from mother, Angry father, mother hitting father, very busy house, alcohol, toys

Sort into piles of what makes a child 1) Happy 2) Sad 3) Has no effect

Purpose of pile sorting exercise:

- Establishes participants as the 'experts'
- Gets participants to talk to *each other*
- Introduces concept of *probing* (The facilitator will probe to ask if whether the participants are sure about their decision and ask them to clarify their reasons)
- Introduces general area of discussion for FGD (childhood)

## Stage 2: Body of Discussion

### Part 1: Let's think about a child:

*Discuss the questions that follow for each scenario in turn. You may find that scenario 2 is not necessary and the discussion is getting repetitive. In that case, move on to scenario 3.*

#### **Scenario 1: Low socio-economic status**

Reena is 1 year old. Her family is poor. They have a 2 room house with dried straw roof. There are 6 members in the family. The house is overcrowded and there isn't much space for Reena to roam around and play.

The family have an open drainage system and mostly cook food on 'chullas' made of mud. They don't have enough money to buy grocery and vegetables. They eat chapatti with 'chatni'. They often borrow 'lassi' from the village to supplement their food.

#### **Scenario 2: Maternal depression**

Raju is 9 months old. His father is an alcoholic and can be angry and unpredictable. He is sometimes violent with his wife and with Raju. Lots of the families money goes towards alcohol. Raju's mother is unhappy, tense and frustrated. She doesn't find interest in doing things and finds it difficult to see pleasure in activities.

1. In what ways might this scenario affect [child's name]? (SHORT TERM CONSEQUENCES)  
**[Probe: "which pile would you have put it into?" – "What type of sadness/happiness?" – can you tell me more about this]**
  - a. Which part of the scenario would affect [child's name] most?
    - i. **[Probe: In what ways would it affect the child? Any other ways? What makes you say that? Do you think others would agree?]**
  - b. When might you first see these consequences? (consequences might be behaviours, illness, relationships with others and so on) (ONSET)
    - i. **[Probe: Is it an unusual or unexpected behaviour such as quietness, violence? Or physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, fever?]**
2. Are these effects very important or just small things? (CONSEQUENCES)
  - a. **[Probe: in what ways are they important? What sorts of small things?]**
3. How long will these [consequences] last for? (It is necessary to understand if the effects are for months, years, whole childhood, adulthood, lifelong) (PROGNOSIS).
  - a. **[Probe: You said that these consequences last for [years] - when might you realise this consequence has lasted? (ONSET)]**
  - b. **[Probe: do any other consequences arise in the longer term?]**
4. How does [this scenario] lead to the [consequences identified in 1] (PATHOGENESIS)
  - a. **[Probe: You said that [alcoholic father] leads to [withdrawn child]. How do these things connect? Is this carried in a particular body part?]**
5. What other events might cause a child to be [consequence]?
  - a. **[Probe: Can you tell me more about this? Have you seen this? [list further consequences] (AETIOLOGY)]**
6. When a child has [consequence] what does a normal family do about it?

- a. **[Probe: What sorts of steps do parents take with the child? Do they discuss it with any family members? Visit doctor or traditional healer? What do these people suggest the parents to do?]**
7. What else could families do if their child has [consequence] because of the family's situation? (MANAGEMENT)
    - [Probe: Do parents need help from other family members or neighbours? How could these people help to overcome the consequence? Do you think a collaborative tactic will buffer the impact of negative situations? Why do you think so?]**
  8. We've talked about [child's name] and the effect of [scenario] on him/her. Would there be any differences in how this situation would affect the child if [child's name] was 12 years old instead of 1 year old?
    - a. Where would these differences be?
      - [Probe: Give example of [consequences] identified earlier. Why do you think that these two children will react differently? What is it that's different about 1 year old and 12 year old children, is it something inside them, or something outside?]** (AETIOLOGY – specifically focussing on critical periods)
      - [Probe: Why does a family follow precautionary measures for a newborn child as compared to elder one? (For example, outsiders are not allowed to enter the room of newborn). Does this apply to the present scenario also?]**
  9. Have you seen something like this [scenario] – what happened? In what ways did this affect the child? (AETIOLOGY) (**Instruction: Only use if you think participants are comfortable and won't think we are asking them to 'tell tales' on their friends and neighbours**)

**Part 2: Let us think about a mother who is pregnant (AETIOLOGY – specifically focussing on in-utero exposure)**

It is sometimes said that a mother's stressful or difficult experiences during pregnancy can affect her unborn child.

1. If a pregnant woman in the village is made to work very hard or is abused by family members, would this have any impact on the unborn child?
  - a. What sort of impact? When? How long would it last?
    - [Probe: Will it affect only mother, child in the womb or child after birth also].**
  - b. Have you seen this yourself? What are your experiences?
  - c. What do other people think?
    - [Instruction: You may need to steer this discussion away from discussion around nutrition during pregnancy and focus on 'stressful or difficult experiences']**
2. What can women do during pregnancy to avoid these impacts of stressful or difficult experiences? What can families do? Please tell us about your experiences?
3. If a child is born small what could be the reasons? **[Probe: does stress of the mother have any impact?]**
4. If a child is born premature what could be the reasons? **[Probe: does stress of the mother have any impact?]**
5. What else during pregnancy has effects on the child?