**Introduction**

The South African based EAT LOVE PLAY TALK Parent Education Programme has been developed for Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners and playgroup facilitators to engage in conversations and activities with parents and caregivers of children up to 5 years of age on the themes of healthy eating, building loving relationships, playful learning and language development.

This light touch programme uses train the trainer approach with local facilitators in community-based programmes and has been implemented with great success (Baker, 2014; Carter, 1996, in Samuelson, 2009:6). Nutrition messaging can be delivered by paraprofessionals or facilitators in community contexts with great success. Recent developments in the field of parent education and nutrition. Research provides evidence that parent education and nutrition can be delivered by local facilitators in community programmes can be implemented with great success (Baker, 2014; Carter, 1996, in Samuelson, 2009:6).

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**Methodology**

A pilot project was conducted in 4 communities across South Africa using group work principles and online training sessions to support and equip the master trainers (n=7), they trained 44 facilitators from 22 ECD centres. Reaching a total of 572 caregivers of children ages 0-5 years. Survey data and ongoing monitoring and evaluation measures provided attendance and an ongoing process data for pilot evaluation that support the pilot goal which was to embed public health nutrition messages into parent education resources and deliver them through locally run parent groups.

**Results**

Improvement in nutrition knowledge was recorded through pre and post KAP questionaires, as well as qualitative feedback focus groups. Lessons learnt in the designing and creation of the material will be shared.

**Key Messages**

- Introduction to responsive caregiving
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Complementary feeding +6 months
- Role of affordable protein
- Importance of fruit and vegetables
- Sources of good carbohydrates
- Family togetherness

**Conclusions**

Build the capacity of ECD centre principals and practitioners to facilitate parent support groups linking to education and nutrition.

Facilitators have a better understanding of the importance of good nutrition and healthy eating habits for young children. The use of a train-the-trainer model is ideal for equipping ECD principals and practitioners with necessary group work skills for parent engagement.

**Recommendations**

Supporting public health messaging should be a priority in group work interventions because of the link to public services in order-promotion areas.

When training community based facilitators to deliver public health messaging, group work skills are vital for success.